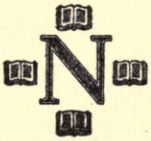
THE RED MOON

MRS. EUGENIE JONES-BACON

With Compliments and best Wishes of one who wore the Gray. 1861 to 1865
Age. 75 Years "Young"
Benj. M. McGee

THE RED MOON



THE RED MOON

BY

MRS. EUGENIE JONES-BACON

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The sweetest gifts of God to a woman,
a husband and a child.

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THE RED MOON

CHAPTER I

A WOMAN'S DREAM

"You may live the religion you cannot talk."

"STOP teasing, Dolly, I'm in earnest. Will you marry me?"

A roguish merriment plays about Dolly's lips. "Marry you, Jonah? What have you to offer a young woman with lofty ideas, and unnumbered desires for the future? Your farm is encumbered with a heavy mortgage, and your purse empty; can you expect me to cast my lot with yours before you have made a fresh start in life?"

Remorse burns in Jonah's heart, for he is conscious that he has sown a plentiful crop of wild oats, and that the yield is one of disappointment and poverty; but, to be told these plain facts by the girl he loves, and wishes to make his wife, is hard to endure, and a hot flush mounts to his cheeks.

But love knows no defeat, and presently Jonah finds fresh courage.

"Sweetheart, every word you say is true, but sometimes adversity rouses a fellow—brings him to his senses. Will you marry me and go West with me? I'll dig for gold, and more than likely pan out a round million. Will that supply your needs?"

Dolly touches lightly her lover's forehead, and replies gravely: "You have caught the Western fever, have you? Your temples are burning hot. All right, go dig with a shovel and pick in the gold fields, then come to me and I will give you my answer."

Impulsively Jonah clasps Dolly's hand and draws her to his side. "Sweetheart, I'd dig with joy, day and night, to win your love." Then the vigor of hope thrills his soul, and he kisses her.

Dolly's head sinks upon her lover's shoulder, every vestige of merriment gone from her face. A new color suddenly flashes its glow of hope over the outlook of her life, as she realizes the vitalizing power of love. The dark clouds of poverty turn to a roseate hue with Jonah as her avowed lover. If love binds their hearts together, what trials can they not endure! Jonah, too, forgets his poverty. Dolly's heart beats close beside his, and his bronzed face touches her pink cheeks. What cares he for money?

"Sweetheart, will you marry me? Say yes, and I will yoke my oxen, make my covered wagon a

house on wheels, and we will start for the gold fields of the Pacific Coast. Hundreds as poor as I am are already on the Western trail. Let us join the hopeful crowd."

The compact is sealed with a kiss, and the wedding day finally fixed for a day in early spring.

When the birds are mating, Dorothy Albina Allen stands before the altar of God with a rosebud in her hand and promises to love, honor, and obey Jonah Baxter. He vows, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," knowing himself to be poverty-stricken.

Cheered with the good wishes of friends, and in a shower of rice, the newly married couple leave Dayton, Ohio. The horns of Buck and Dock are adorned with old slippers, and there is a broad band of white ribbon tied across the covered wagon. This improvised home on wheels shows the skilful touch of a woman's hand. A barrel of cornmeal, and sacks of flour, share the corners with a medley of the small articles needed on a long and wearisome overland journey. On the sides hang a good store of smoked bacon, and sun-dried beef, called, in country parlance, "jerked meat"; and the cooking stove and bird cage are in close touch.

Dolly is fond of pets, and sees with pleasure that her yellow cat and Jonah's fox terrier are cuddled together, on the foot of the mattress.

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Neither Jonah nor his bride realize the tedium of the journey they are to take, with slow-moving oxen as their only means of locomotion. Happily, in the hearts of the young there pulsates a well-spring of expectation, and in the first days of love a silvery glow transforms commonplace things, obliterating the dark forebodings and shadows that sometimes mar life's outlook.

Jonah and his wife are determined to master fate, and with hope and health to brace their resolve they are confident of success in the gold fields.

It was in 1849 that the country went mad over the discovery of gold in the far West. Numbers of Eastern men left homes, and in their desire to dig for gold they gave little thought to the prospect of midnight attacks of Indians. Not yet had the Western plains with their bleaching human bones given clear proof of the deadly vengeance of the Red Man resenting the encroachment of others upon his happy hunting grounds.

With a woman's instinct, Dolly realizes that the time to train a husband to suit oneself is in the early days of married life, before love becomes an old story and subsides. Bravely, then, in everyday occurrences, she uses the hammer upon the forge of her husband's life, and molds while the iron is malleable. She has an abiding belief in the promises contained in the leaves of her father's well-worn

Bible. He was a Scotch clergyman, often preached of hell and hell-fire; and underlined his favorite texts; one of which reads, "*Ye shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Holy Angels.*"

Well grounded in Scriptural doctrines, Dolly has developed decided ideas, and now insists that both man and beast must rest on the seventh day. Jonah protests, but finally yields. On Sunday, then, the oxen are tethered beside the road. Dolly rises early to make coffee, and on an improvised camp table spreads the breakfast. Dressed in their "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes, Dolly reads aloud from her father's Bible, often interrupted by Jonah's comments.

"Sweetheart, old Solomon must have had you in mind when he wrote those Proverbs, and King Lemuel describes you to a tee, when he says, 'There are many daughters (who) have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.' Read that verse again, 'Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.' I say, sweetheart, these white shirts washed and ironed by you beside the campfire, make a man feel worthy to sit in the gate of any city alongside the mighty men of the land."

A merry laugh indicates how pleased Dolly feels over this compliment. Callous indeed is the woman

who is not stronger and more hopeful for words of commendation from her husband.

Time wears on, with its routine of daily duties. Fortunately each new experience has its joys and pleasures, as well as its hours of depression; and the young heed not the shadows on life's pathway until the revolving lamp of fate turns its hooded side to them.

The grey mists gradually overshadow Jonah's hopes.

"Dolly, we have jogged along with these oxen for months and are not yet near the Pacific Coast. Where are the crowds going West? The few we have met, like myself, are ready to wheel about and go back. Sweetheart, if one-half the stories be true of the richness of gold fields in California, every mother's son in America would be on this overland trail. Shall we go back?" Dolly is silent. She reaches for her father's Bible, and, caressing it, says: "Father often found a solution for his perplexities within these pages. Why can't we do the same? Let us select a verse and see if it will shed light on our plans, for I am not able to advise you."

Jonah shouts to his oxen: "Whoa, Buck! Whoa, Dock!" With merriment in his voice, he replies, "Dolly, you know every word of the Bible from cover to cover. If our future plans are to be

decided by a verse, let chance have a showing, not your familiarity with the Scripture."

"I'm willing to leave the selection to chance. Blindfold me, then, while I point out a verse."

With her eyes tightly blindfolded and the Bible closed, Dolly gently opens the Book, and places her finger midway of a page.

"Read that verse, Jonah."

With emphasis he begins: "No man having put his hands to the plough——" His voice quivers slightly, but his wife encourages him, and he starts afresh. "No man having put his hands to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of Heaven." They are both awed into silence. Jonah whispers: "Dolly, that test has been squarely and fairly done. God surely is your guide, and from hence He shall be mine."

"No lane is so long but that it has its turning." In time they reach the Western coast, and there they find a wilderness of golden-tinted poppies growing in wild confusion on the sandy cliffs that overhang the sea, its water glistening like liquid diamonds canopied by a turquoise sky. Jonah loses no time in staking his claims, and builds himself an adobe cabin. He believes the little town may yet become a mighty city, like Rome, built on the slope of many hills, with long reaches of land beyond.

Each country has certain advantages and disad-

vantages, and it is not long before the once hopeful Jonah begins to emphasize the disappointment he feels in his new home in the West.

"I say, Dolly, we have reached the Pacific Coast only to be choked to death with sea sand,—sea sand, with not an atom of gold dust in it. It blows into my eyes, goes down my back, and covers me with grit. I'm ready to start East. Are you?"

Dolly has always tried to cheer her husband, but she, too, is discouraged. No sooner has she tidied her little cottage, washed and polished her dishes, than a gust of wind blows the sand over everything. Rain has not fallen for six months, the earth is dry, and yet, at every doorstep, flowers bloom and vegetation flourishes. Flowers are perennial in California.

Jonah is in despair. "Come, Dolly, select another verse and decide if we shall go East, or stay here and starve on sea sand. Don't tell me to wait and be patient. Without rain this country may blossom like the Garden of Eden, but I'm not happy. I did not endure that long overland journey for the fun of picking flowers. I came to dig for gold, but it's only worthless sea sand I find."

Dolly's voice, always merry with laughter, is subdued; she folds a small garment, quite finished now, and brushing the grit from her dress says: "Do you believe in dreams, Jonah?"

"I reckon I do, if they happen to suit me."

"You know, dear," continues Dolly, "the old prophets were dreamers of dreams. Father Allen believed a dream dreamed three times, and told to the one you loved best in the world, would insure its realization."

Jonah makes no reply, but clinches his pipe-stem with a firm grip, and in lieu of more profitable employment, whittles a stick. Every aspect of his life reveals a dismal failure, leaving him without faith or hope for the future.

His wife, too, is losing her buoyancy. She is far from home and home-ties with many daily duties taxing her failing strength. One sweet picture, however, remains in her mind—the hour when, with joyous expectations, she walked to the altar with a rosebud in her hand, and a well-spring of love in her heart. She constantly reverts to her dream, dreamed three times, and now she will tell it to Jonah, the one she loves best.

"I do not deserve to be loved, Dolly, I, with only bad luck dragging me down."

Dolly looks up with a twinkle in her eyes, and a remnant of her coquettish smile. "We married for richer or for poorer, and so must meet the days as they come, must we not?"

"It's for poorer, sweetheart. True, I have the best wife God ever gave a man, and if only I can

make money, she shall dress in silks and satins. Thank God, we have peace in our home, and sometimes, Dolly, you do smile your courtship smile, which gives me strength to bear my trials."

But Dolly is in a contemplative mood.

"Jonah, I care nothing for silks and satins. I prefer to use money to lighten the burden of the oppressed, to comfort the widow and orphan. There are many ways that I could use gold coin," and a far-away look overspreads her face.

"Wife, you are dreaming with your eyes wide open. Wake up, and tell me what you discovered in your vision. Was it gold nuggets? I'm ready to dig, if I can dig to some purpose."

"My vision did not locate a gold mine for you, but I dreamed you amassed a fortune by the aid of a sand shovel. Be patient," and she motions him to be seated. "If this new town could be relieved of the accumulation of sand washed ashore by the incoming tides of ages, there is no doubt in my mind it would become the garden spot of America. Now, then, I dreamed that with a large sand shovel you scraped away this unstable sea sand, making your land saleable in lots and so filled your pockets with gold coin, and not with gold dust."

Jonah jumps to his feet. "This is a gigantic task! By the shade of George Washington, what a difficult bit of work! Sweetheart, I'd need two

lives to finish this unending job. A whale might gulp up tons of sea sand and spue them into the sea, but imagine me shoveling sand under the rays of this tropical sun! I'd need a quick-growing vine to shield me, and ravens to feed me." He strides nervously up and down. "The very mention of food makes me realize our barrel of meal is exhausted, and the cruse of oil empty. How can I refill them? Not by shoveling sand. It's all right to have faith in the Bible, and dreams, but a fellow must be practical to succeed. Must he not?"

Dolly busies herself making a drawing of the mammoth sand shovel, while Jonah sits inertly by. A gust of wind covers him with sand.

"Confound it! This pestiferous grit coats my tongue, blinds my eyes, and chokes me. I'm ready to shovel dirt, anything to be rid of the nuisance."

Dolly has finished her drawing and explains how easily the sand can be removed.

The dark side of life's lantern now revolves, and the gloomy outlook changes to a bright glow of hope, while Jonah toils day by day with Buck and Dock drawing his sand shovel. Jeeringly, men ask when he will dig a new sea? Their idle taunt has no effect, for there is light ahead for Jonah.

One success, one joy never satisfies us. We are ever seeking something else, anticipating, perhaps, a trial, or a sorrow.

Jonah does make money with his new device, but he is not content, and seeks a new field of thought. Standing beside his wife he asks:

"Dolly, if I die, will you marry again? Will you share my hard-earned gold with some fellow eager to live in idleness? Your Bible you love so well advocates a woman's marrying seven times, but I'd rise from my grave and choke the man who dared kiss your lips."

Dolly laughs at the very thought, but her voice is sad as she replies: "We intuitively shrink from burdens that we have borne day by day. Married women find it a difficult task to train one man to suit their exalted ideas, so then, if our young day-dreams of happiness with the man of our choice turn to sorrow, and he dies, remember it adds new care to one's life to train another husband. Pray do not fear that your chair beside the hearthstone will ever be filled by anyone else." A roguish merriment dances about her deep-set brown eyes. "When I married you, Jonah, life was a mystery to me. I believed the sun would never go below the horizon, but alway envelop me in its soft rays. I pictured my pathway strewn with roses." She plucks a rosebud from the vine overhead. "That delusion is over. I have grown wise as I steam over the kitchen fire, or bend over the washtub. However, when the day's work is finished and you

sit beside me, I forget the toil, and am quite content and happy. Are you, Jonah?"

Recalling the hard trials his wife has endured, Jonah's heart is too full for words. He passes his hand over his eyes to shut out this mental vision, and resolves to double his energy in shovelling sea sand with his mammoth sand shovel.

. . . . .

The shifting sands of San Francisco were really removed by just such an invention. Like the fabled giant, San Francisco continues to make rapid progress, and no lovelier place can be found than the city at the Golden Gate of the Pacific; where in 1579 Sir Francis Drake proposed to his sea captain that a religious service be held in grateful acknowledgment for God's protection during their first voyage around the world.

It is in San Francisco that Jonah and his wife are now settled, and where a wee brown-eyed girl, named Albina Allen, comes to enliven the home, a tiny rosebud to develop within the walls of the rude cabin. Jonah fears to touch the fairy-like creature, lest it, too, vanish from sight, as did his early dreams of wealth.

In the West the Indians call white children "snow babies," and now, gazing with fixed attention into the cradle at Albina Allen, an old Indian squaw makes a strange prediction. As she sways

her muscular body back and forth seven times, crosses her forehead solemnly, and turns abruptly to the east to give efficacy to her words, she says: "Snow baby bend like a reed, seven times, but snow baby no break. Snow baby moon rise red like blood, but snow baby sun set in gold, bright, like day."

Being more or less influenced by superstition, Dolly ponders over this curious prophecy. She watches with loving tenderness the development of her little girl, with the deep-set brown eyes, and wonders why this curious prediction should be made over her precious child's life. For Dolly hopes her daughter will fulfil the philanthropic ideas she herself has never been able to accomplish.

As the years pass, Dolly's dream is fulfilled, for Jonah makes a modest fortune. He builds a large and comfortable house, and other children come to enliven the Baxter home, but, like the early blooming poppies, they droop, and die. Side by side the little graves lie in God's Acre. Albina Allen, however, develops rapidly, and on her young brow there is a sad expression, reminding her mother of the heritage foretold by the Indian squaw.

The little human reed bends almost to breaking over the death of a tiny brother, whose little casket she covers with white rosebuds. This is her first trial.

The second bending of the reed of her life, is over

the suffering of "Uncle Tom," as depicted in a book that is firing the fuse of abolition. With a child's keen sympathy for the downtrodden, she asks day after day: "Mamma, is there nothing a little girl can do to help 'Uncle Tom' out of his misery? When I'm older will you let me do something for the poor negroes?"

Dolly encourages these philanthropic ideas in her daughter, whom she feels sure will make her life a useful one, not one to be frittered away as a society butterfly, leaving no good works to mark the pathway of her existence.

Though quite in agreement on most subjects, Jonah and his wife differ widely on this subject of slavery, a subject now agitating the country at large. In reading Northern papers containing stories of cruelty on Southern plantations, Jonah gets excited, and tossing aside the papers declares: "Every black man in America should be on his knees in gratitude for his servitude, which in the end places him within sound of the Christian church bells. He was brought over bound physically, but is now mentally enlightened by the story of Redemption. In His love for the untutored cannibals of Africa, God appointed human agents to drag them away from the dense canebrakes where in a miasmic climate missionaries dare not risk their own lives."

Dolly exclaims: "The hand of God linked with the hand of the oppressor! Never, never, Jonah."

Little Albina is deeply moved by these discussions between her father and mother. She thinks as her mother does, but listens attentively while her father says: "Dolly, both your grandfathers and mine helped to start slavery, not alone in America, but far back in the English colonies. Now, no compunction of conscience troubles me, when I compare the cannibals of Africa with the slaves on a Southern plantation, contentedly strumming the strings of their banjos. We must all labor. Have you forgotten our own anxieties when we first reached this Western wilderness? I would have gladly welcomed a master to refill the barrel of meal for me then."

Dolly is oppressed, for her life is saddened by the death, one after another, of her little babies, whose deaths, like silver threads, keep her thoughts turning upwards, where she feels they await her coming. She is loath to discuss the painful subject of slavery with her husband.

Day by day little Albina spends hours beside the sea; its ceaseless roar seems linked with her life, and her eyes follow the great sun as it dips down beyond the sea line, gleaming like a red moon of fire. Full of hope, she yet wonders why the Indian squaw should predict seven sorrows to overtake her—to

bend her to the breaking point. Intermixed with the prophecy is the comforting assurance that her sunset will be "bright, like day."

This only child is a great pet with her father. He calls her his "California poppy," and he watches her maturing to womanhood under the godly influence of her mother.

CHAPTER II

1860 TO 1865

"Much to learn and much to forget."—BROWNING.

IT is now the height of the season in Saratoga, and the hotels are filled to their utmost capacity. Visitors from Virginia, Mississippi, the Carolinas, Georgia and Louisiana are here with their families, a retinue of servants, carriages and fine horses. They have come to drink of the life-giving waters, as an antidote to the miasma of their low-lands. Fully conscious that the best blood of England flows in their veins, they care little for the formalities of society, which those of humble parentage study, hoping thereby to gain an entrance into the coveted social circle.

Major Patterson of Vicksburg, and Colonel Furgerson of Virginia, meet morning after morning, at the Congress Spring, but they have not become acquainted. Major Patterson is the first to speak.

"Good morning, sir; I'm sure we are both Southerners, why do we not come into closer touch as we drink of these life-giving waters?" Colonel Fur-

gerson extends his hand, gives a secret Masonic symbol, and at once they are friends.

Mrs. Furgerson finds Mrs. Patterson depressed, needing cheer. Her eldest daughter, a mere child in years, who should be under the sweet influences of a mother's love, is on her wedding tour, married to the owner of a vast estate in Mississippi. This child-wife must soon assume the heavy responsibility resting upon the mistress of hundreds of slaves, and her mother is depressed at the outlook.

Women are not alone in craving sympathy, but often men in real womanish moods seek comfort in their perplexities. Colonel Furgerson gladly consults his new comrade on the management of his estate in Virginia.

"The old ancestral home of Stirlingate," he says, "which I have inherited with its hallowed associations, was first established in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and in English style descends from father to oldest son. It is now in danger of going to rack and ruin. For years I have resided in New York, leaving my affairs on the plantation in the hands of my colored foreman, Sandy, who is either incompetent, or neglectful."

"Why, my dear sir," exclaims Major Patterson, "you need a real live Yankee overseer down there to stir up the indolent negroes. I have no doubt your old foreman sleeps half the day, and dances

a greater part of the night. I'll guarantee that your corn crop is knee-deep in grass, and your tobacco plants covered with caterpillars. Pay a Northern man a good salary, and your beautiful estate will blossom like a rose. Your next year's crop will amaze you."

"Where am I to find such a man?"

"I can fully recommend a young fellow recently graduated from the agricultural department of a well-known college. Shall I have him see you at your office in New York?"

"Do so, Major, and I shall be under lasting obligations."

It is an accepted fact, that in these days of slavery no Southern man of any mental ability will assume the position of overseer, even with a lucrative salary. He prefers to suffer want rather than be called an "overseer." The position is filled entirely by Northern-bred men, with little or no inherent love for the negro—(such as Southerners feel, who from childhood are petted and spoiled by their black mammies)—and with full scope given them by the master, the overseer uses such force and cruelty as finds voice in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

The master's duty is not fulfilled in paying a liberal salary to his taskmaster, with a bonus on each bale of cotton, tierce of rice, or hogshead of molasses or sugar. Having a keen desire for gain, the

Northern men-drivers urge on the work with the lash, if necessary. Meanwhile, the owner of the estate summers at Saratoga or travels in Europe.

. . . . .

And so it happens that just before Christmas in 1860, Mr. Wallis Bickers of Dayton, Ohio, presents a card of introduction from Major Patterson to Colonel Furgerson.

"Be seated, sir," and the Wall Street lawyer closes a ponderous volume and turns his attention to the cultivation of cotton, corn, and tobacco. He talks freely with his visitor.

"Have you a wife?"

"No, sir; my mother, a widow, lives with me."

"Good idea, sir; a man is lonely without a woman to look after his comfort. What are your politics?"

Wallis Bickers hesitates, then answers, candidly: "I am a Northern man, but have never meddled with politics."

Colonel Furgerson wheels in his revolving chair, and faces his visitor.

"You are wise, sir, for if I mistake not, we are soon to have civil war; at least such are the signs at Washington. If it does come, it will be a mighty upheaval. As a Southern man, I feel no sympathy with the movement in Boston, and elsewhere, for the education of the black race. God designs different men for different spheres of work. A full-

blooded horse runs well on the race track, but attempt to win a stake with a mule, and the owner will fail to clear the animal's food. On the other hand, hitch a thoroughbred Kentucky horse to a plough, and he will kick it into splinters rather than drag its weight over rough ground.

"Edward Colston, of Bristol, England, advocated the duty of educating the working classes. What did the mayor and aldermen of that old city do? They at once voted him to be 'a dangerous person, likely to turn the sons of the poor into vipers to sting the rich when once they are raised out of ignorance.'

"If Northern men will study the contentment of the black race south of Mason and Dixon's line, they will let them alone to live their simple lives—lives free from care. I speak of this matter, Mr. Bickers, for if you take charge at Stirlingate I wish no abolition doctrine talked to my happy slaves. And now, let me ask if you have had practical experience in the cultivation of land? Book knowledge is well, but not all sufficient."

"Yes, Colonel! My diploma in the agricultural department at Amherst was given me after practical work on the farm. If you wish references as to my character, I can give them."

Colonel Furgerson laughs.

"I judge a man by his facial expression, that

mysterious hall-mark about his mouth that infallibly demonstrates his character. The worst rogues of to-day are many of them highly esteemed church members, moving in good society."

Although he had strong faith in the physiognomy of persons, Colonel Furgerson makes careful inquiry as to the character of the man he is about to engage. It proved entirely satisfactory.

About the holidays Wallis and his mother arrive. They establish themselves in great comfort, with "Granny Kitty's" daughter as cook, and a "likely girl" from "the quarters" as housemaid.

In Ohio, Mrs. Bickers herself performed the duties of her household, and her son, by periods of manual labor, worked his way through college. Now, he never saddles, or unharnesses a horse, nor fetches his mother a bucket of water. Mrs. Bickers is having an easy time.

Negroes are astute observers, and "Granny Kitty" eyes the newcomers with a cynical smile playing about her lips. She places her arms akimbo as she says to her husband: "Sandy, dese w'ite folks is some Yankee trash what Mars Jemes is picked up on de street in New York. What for he send us sech w'ite folks, hea? No 'count w'ite buckra! I tell you, Sandy, yourn day of rej'icing is done gone. You might as well go hang your harp on de willow tree, cayse dat cotton planter whip

strapped sidewise ober your shoulder is to be unstrapped. Mars Jemes is hear tell of some of yourn fool idea about freedom. You a jet black crow now a talking 'bout de time when you'll be free, and a snow white dove! Sandy, yonder is a sheep dog to guard dis place," and she tilts her turbaned head in the direction of Mr. Wallis Bickers. "I neber did hab no use for Yankees; dey don't understand we colored folks like we's massa and missus——"

Sandy's downcast expression indicates plainly that he is of his wife's opinion; yet with the old-time intuitive respect for the white race, he doffs his hat to the man who is to supersede him, while deep in his heart there surge emotions which he wisely suppresses.

After the New Year, an aged brother joins Mrs. Bickers, and the three live on the "fat of the land."

"Granny Kitty's" wrath grows more intense, and she indignantly declares: "Missus up in New York wid all her money neber has sech suffusion of victuals! Turkeys an' chickens ain't got no time to grow, wid dat w'ite 'oman a ordering my Zenas to chop off deir heads. De Lord only knows what ole' Massa would say if he could rise from he grave an' see dese poor w'ite folks a gallavantin' up and down at Sterlingate, an' a going to drive in Massa's fine carriage, jest de same as if it is dey own. My

Lord, how my blood biles! yet both me an' Sandy is 'bleeged to keep we mouth shet tight. I t'inks a powerful lot o' nights."

The years pass, and Colonel Furgerson's prediction as to civil war comes true. Formerly an officer in a Virginia regiment, he closes his New York office, and hastens to his native State to offer his services in the Southern army. His wife and children remain North. Bidding them good-bye, he assures them: "We will annihilate the Northern troops, drive them into the sea. Look out for me very soon, with the victor's plume in my helmet."

The word "soon" echoes and re-echoes in the gloom of Mrs. Furgerson's Fifth Avenue home. When New York is decked with bunting to celebrate a victory, Mrs. Furgerson instead bows her windows, as is customary in Philadelphia after a death in the family.

Four years of bitter conflict pass before the bonnie blue flag of the Confederacy is furled, never more to lead brave soldiers to battle.

CHAPTER III

ALICE GREY

The whispering shell is mute
And often is evil cheer;
She shall stand on the shore and cry in vain
Many and many a year.

HOWELLS.

ALBINA has matured rapidly since we left her beside the Western sea. With wealth at her command, she adheres to her purpose of helping the downtrodden, lifting the fallen.

After repeated refusals, she gains her parents' consent to go East and do what she can for the suffering soldiers. There under the care of her aunt she devotes her time to reading for the convalescent in the hospitals; it matters not if they be Northern or Southern soldiers.

The end of the war finds many sick and wounded, needing the soothing influence of woman, a few of whom are doomed never to return to their families. Their eyes follow Albina as she passes back and forth in the wards. She has neither beauty of face nor form, and it is the magnetism of her deep-set

brown eyes that brings others to her feet, ready and willing to do her bidding. Young as she is, her life is dedicated to charitable work. Womanly love fills her heart and makes her equally kind to all, whether they wear the blue or the grey.

It is when in this noble work of ministering to the sick and suffering that Albina comes in touch with Mr. Wallis Bickers of Dayton, Ohio, the town from which her father and mother came. In fact, Wallis Bickers remembers that, as a mere lad, he joined in the fun of showering rice over a couple starting West in a covered wagon, who were none other than Albina's father and mother. This fact opens the doors to a new friendship.

Albina ministers daily to two soldiers, Munroe by name; one, an officer wearing the blue, the other, a boy who glories in the thought that his uniform is grey. His last bugle has sounded for taps, and he never will buckle on the sword of which he is proud. Through Albina's keen insight she discovers that the Munroes are brothers, but neither knows of the other's presence under the same roof. Paul Munroe, the elder, with tears in his eyes, now confides to Albina that he recognized his youngest brother on the field of battle at Appomattox, as with a plunge forward he rushed into the Confederate lines with bayonet fixed. With the natural love of a brother over-riding every other feeling, he quickly threw

down his gun, and tried to stay the flow of blood from a wound made by his keen sword, and while doing so, received a bullet from his own company which shattered his leg. Each day Albina bears loving messages from one to the other, and she holds the hand of the boy in grey as he passes beyond the Sentinel at the gateway of death. Later, she essays to soothe the pangs of regret in the bosom of the officer doomed to hobble on crutches for the rest of his life.

As yet, no Confederate soldier is willing to admit that he is whipped; he is overpowered, that is all. But descendants of Colonial aristocrats, in whose veins flows the bluest of blue blood, now have their iron will sorely tried. Accustomed to luxury, they must now break the fetters that bind them to a life of ease, and lay hold of the plough-handle of manual labor. So only can they hope to rise above the ruin and devastation of war, which has reduced their homes to ashes, with chimney stacks pointing, like the Sphinx of Egypt, to the splendors of the past.

The burning words of their great chieftain continue to ring in their ears: "We have fought this fight as long and as well as we know how. We have been defeated. For us, as Christian people, there is but one course to pursue. We must accept the situation."

Before the grass grows over the graves of their fathers and brothers, the women of the South, once belles of the drawing-room, enter the kitchen. With their sleeves rolled up, they follow Sir Joshua Reynolds' recipe, and "mix edibles with brains." Engaged in these homely duties, they sing the "Lorelei" or some other love song, and, in fact, even stand under marriage bells with poverty as their only inheritance.

When the young gather about the fabled fount to drink, they forget that, like Marah's well, the water may some day be bitter. Love is not easily discouraged by adverse circumstances, nor is Cupid averse to poverty, even absolute want.

There is, however, another form of love which is not entangled in the fairy web of a sybarite, and it is this disinterested love that actuates Albina to leave wealth and home to devote her life to charitable work. When the citizens of Boston call for volunteer teachers to go South to teach the negroes, Albina promptly sends in her name, and is assigned to a little log-cabin school in Fairfax County, Virginia, some three miles from Stirlingate, where Wallis Bickers is in charge of hired laborers on Colonel Furgerson's estate.

At this time untutored colored men are hurled on to the platform of untried duties, and by a strange fatality were granted the franchise. Is it any won-

der that these illiterate men wear the cap of freedom with a comical mien? Or is it surprising that the voices of their former masters cry out for shame, when their slaves by a powerful turn of the political wheel are elected to seats in the halls of Southern legislatures to formulate State laws of which they know absolutely nothing?

It is at this trying period that Albina Baxter arrives in Virginia, and renews her acquaintance with Wallis Bickers. Isolated as she is by her chosen work, which debars her from meeting refined Southern ladies, she turns to Mrs. Bickers for companionship, and thereafter is a frequent visitor at Stirlingate. This colonial home in every way fulfills her ideas of the South's old ancestral homesteads.

The dwelling is a spacious one, with a twelve-foot piazza running around the house, and supported by massive stone pillars in Corinthian design. The wide piazza effectively protects the rooms from the summer sun, and also from the fury of winter storms. Of an evening, when the moon silvers every object, it is an ideal promenade. What is more natural than that Albina and Wallis should spend happy hours there, their friendship each day becoming more binding?

Roses clamber in luxurious abandon about the pillars. Though unpruned, uncared for, they are

laden with blooms. The old-fashioned boxwood borders of the garden, once a joy to successive owners, is trodden under foot by the heel of the late invaders. The kitchen garden in the rear shows loving care. "Granny Kitty" and her helpers are convinced that some day "Missus" will come from New York, and will need chickens and vegetables. The rearing of poultry, and cultivating of the garden is a self-imposed duty she assumes, while her husband, Sandy, is hired to till the soil. Her son, Zenas, is warned never to wring off the heads of chickens or turkeys save by her command. She says: "If dat white 'oman in Massa's house is got to eat fowl meat, she kin buy an' clean dem herself. Us don't mean to raise fowls for her to eat." "Granny" is staunchly loyal to her white "chillens," as she calls Colonel Furgerson's family, having been a slave of the Colonel's father.

The old homestead of Stirlingate bears the scars not only of Northern bullets but also of the War of 1812, when the Tories entered the mansion and chopped into an old-fashioned massive mahogany bureau drawer to secure silver and jewels.

Impoverished nobility of the Old World often find it difficult to maintain their ancestral estates, and now but for the energy of its present owner, Stirlingate would totter to its ruin; this beautiful house that General Lee made his headquarters, and

from the upper enthroned balcony looked down upon his soldiers bivouacked in the meadows. Here in the evening fireflies hold high carnival, and at the midnight hour mocking-birds trill their impassioned love songs.

Beyond, and sweeping off toward the blue hills, is a wealth of dark forest trees, the middle distance a cultivated area of corn.

" Father Time " and his truant son, the " Tide," wait for no man. Is it any wonder that with such environment Wallis Bickers " makes hay while the sun shines," and seizes upon the present moment to win a trusting heart, before its owner realizes that her feelings are those of love?

Beneath a bower of cloth of gold roses, and the soft light of a crescent moon, Albina and Wallis Bickers plight their troth, and he calls her his " California poppy," a name dear to her.

Albina now laughs at the prediction of the Indian squaw. The petty cares of her school dwindle into insignificance when her lover spends his evenings with her, and in the morning she sees her sun rise with golden tints, and not in the least like a great red moon. She feels that she can bear more than the seven trials marked out for her, if only Wallis holds her hand. Day by day they plan for their future, as if neither could die.

Scarce a year has passed when Colonel Furgerson

pays a hurried visit to Stirlingate to consult his manager about a project he has in mind.

A large mill owner in England, a friend of Major Patterson, is in possession of a rare package of cotton seed, that produces a delicate pink fibre. Cloth woven from its long and durable staple shows the sheen of silk, the soft flexibility of wool, and the ravishing color of a peach blossom. How these seeds were purloined from the descendants of the Pharaohs of Egypt is a carefully guarded secret, as for centuries this plant has been the exclusive property of the Crown; and a penalty of death is said to await any one who cultivates it outside the royal domain.

America, a free country, is not under the tyrannic power of an Eastern potentate, and the climate of England not being warm enough to mature the cotton plant, Mr. Lathan offers the package of seeds to Major Patterson. As he possesses no cotton land, he passes the offer on to Colonel Furgerson, suggesting that he make an effort to grow this singular but certainly money-producing plant.

The Colonel proposes to Wallis Bickers that as soon as the crops are laid by for the summer, he shall cross the ocean and secure the precious package of seed, for it is only to be delivered personally. Wallis consents, and on August the 31st sails from New York.

The sloping terraces on Staten Island are ablaze with summer's gayest blossoms, making brilliant glimpses of color to blend with the waters of the bay that are calm and unruffled. Wallis enjoys the sea, and each day of the voyage writes a few lines to his beloved Albina. A rambling letter, he posts it in Queenstown. A few extracts reveal his state of mind.

"SEPTEMBER 3rd—MID-OCEAN.

"Darling Albina, life would be a dream of bliss were you beside me. This, my first voyage, is ideal. I spend many hours peering over the rails, for there is a fascination about the waves with the Portuguese men of war atop, their fin-like sails set. The water is clear and I'm wondering if countless dead lie entombed below, shrouded in clinging seaweed and guarded by silvery fish that glide in and out among the beds of coral. It is said scarce a ripple disturbs the sleep of those who go down into the depths of the sea. Why is it, then, that the human heart instinctively shudders at the mere suggestion of such a grave?

"But, I must not write of sad thoughts. My one longing is to embrace you, my precious little California poppy——"

"SEPT. 8th.

"Strange but true that before I set foot on land, I am already counting the weeks and the days till

I shall be with you again. I cannot live without you, for you are essential to my happiness. Life is a blank without your presence. Write to your parents and gain their consent to be my wife as soon as I return to the States.

"Day by day I picture your frail young form in the schoolroom, surrounded by a stupid odoriferous crowd of negroes, and every fibre of my being revolts at this self-sacrifice. Colonel Furgerson is really correct when he says that the Southern negroes will never be more content and happy than when the slaves of their masters.

"Darling Albina, give up this self-imposed work of teaching. Leave it to be performed by 'the philanthropic Bostonians.'"

"SEPT. 9th.

"We have just sighted the Emerald Isle. What a thrill of joy we all experienced at the tinge of green on God's beautiful earth, even though it be still some distance away. I am closing this to post at Queenstown. Longing to have a letter from my darling Albina, I am ever her devoted lover,

"WALLIS."

"SEPT. 14th.

"I visited, to-day, the large mills of Mr. Ernest Lathan, at Lancaster, who has already delivered to me the package of precious cotton seed. He has

also presented me with two beautiful English dogs. One for the Colonel, a greyhound, and a jet black water spaniel named Beauty, which I shall present to you. She will soon be as devoted to her mistress as I am.

"I am deeply impressed with the home life of this rich Englishman. His house is surrounded by high stone walls, against which are interlaced fruit trees and grape vines, with here and there a stunted magnolia bush. I tried to describe the magnolia trees in the forests of America to Mr. Lathan.

"Within the walls of his grounds it is difficult to imagine that a busy city lies just outside. In fact, my head is still dizzy with the hum of the spindles in his large factory, which is near at hand.

"By invitation I dined with him, and was presented to his wife and daughters; rosy-cheeked girls, but neither of them has the sweet charm of manner, the simple grace of my darling Albina, whose eyes even here follow me with their depth of true feeling.

"Your first letter reached me this morning, and I kissed impulsively the words your heart indited and pen wrote.

"To-morrow I leave for a hurried glance at the metropolis, spending a few hours at Manchester and Birmingham.

"God bless you, my precious California flower, the sweetest flower that ever bloomed in earth's gar-

den. And to think it is for me overpowers me with gratitude! Your devoted WALLIS."

"MORLEY'S HOTEL, LONDON,
"SEPT. 28th.

"I should enjoy this busy city of London if you were only with me. I am very lonely and homesick at times, and fully appreciate the idea of the poet, that one is never more alone than when in the midst of a crowd.

"However, there are a number of Americans in this hotel, and as they are universally sociable, I hope soon to become acquainted."

"SEPT. 29th.

"To-day I had the great pleasure of seeing Her Majesty the Queen. It happened in this wise: Last evening I enjoyed a short conversation with a Mrs. Grey and her daughter, Miss Alice. They are from Chicago, and informed me that the Queen would pass Hyde Park corner at three o'clock and then drive in the park. With pity for my ignorance of localities they kindly offered me a seat in their carriage. I accepted with profound gratitude.

"They have cheered me greatly. Miss Alice Grey is very bright and witty, in fact, captivating, and reminds me somewhat, in the tones of her voice, of my dear Albina. Miss Grey is considered one of

the most stylishly dressed women in the hotel. She is really a beauty.

"However, dear Albina, it matters not what women I meet; you will ever be the choice pearl of my love, the little California poppy that blooms in the warmest, cosiest corner of my heart.

"Your devoted WALLIS B."

"OCT. 2nd.

"I am sure you will be pleased to know how much Mrs. Grey and Miss Alice are adding to my enjoyment of London. They allow me to accompany them in their rounds of sight-seeing, and to-day they honored me by being my guest for a drive in Hyde Park. You may be sure I secured a fine turnout.

"Miss Alice has large, soft, brown eyes like those dreamy eyes one sees in the heads of young seals,—eyes that seem to cling for comfort to those who have the privilege of gazing into their depths. She will make some man's home a happy one. She and her mother expect to sail for America about the date I have fixed upon, and I cannot but hope they will select the same ship. It is so pleasant to have acquaintances aboard. I have suggested it to them.

"I neglected to mention in my last that although we had a fine view of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, she did not impress me as being one whit queenly in

appearance, not so majestic in outward carriage as the young Chicago lady vis-a-vis. However, we felt a queer kind of sensation in looking into the face of a bona fide queen, one of whom since our childhood we have read.

"Your devoted WALLIS B."

"2 P. M.

"P. S.—I close this letter rather hurriedly as Mrs. Grey is in the writing-room awaiting her daughter. They are going to the National Gallery and allow me to join them. It is pleasant to view pictures with those who are artistically inclined. Miss Alice has been studying art in Paris."

"6 P. M.

"I must hurry, as it is time for dinner. My newfound friends have kindly invited me to sit at their private table instead of the table d'hôte. To a stranger this latter is tiresome in the extreme.

"Your loving WALLIS B."

"OCTOBER 18th, 7 o'ck P. M.

"Here in London the hours slip by rapidly and I have little time to write you, darling. Mrs. Grey and Miss Alice are my guests this evening to see one of the greatest living actors play at Drury Lane Theatre. I have booked my passage by the

steamship *Dorogan*, which sails from Liverpool October 22nd."

"12 P. M.

"P. S.—We have just returned from the theatre. The play was fine and Miss Alice bewitching in a pale grey evening silk. I am sure you would like her, she is so unaffected and simple.

"Good-night, and good-bye, dear Albina. This of necessity must be my last letter, as I sail by the next outward-bound ship. Pray earnestly for your own

WALLIS B."

CHAPTER IV

THE SHIPWRECK

"But the stately wide-winged ship lies wrecked,
Lies wrecked on the unknown deep:
Far under, dead in his coral bed
The lover lies asleep." HOWELLS.

THE *Dorogan* leaves the docks of Liverpool with a heavy mist hugging the water's edge. The great ship moves sluggishly, as if loth to quit the harbor. Gradually the massive buildings of the city are enveloped in clouds of fog and lost to view. Involuntarily Wallis Bickers contrasts the brilliant sunshine of New York harbor with the chilling gloom of the English coast at noon. Beads of moisture settle on his topcoat, and seem to chill his heart, yet he really is happy at the thought of the homeward voyage, and comforts himself that after the mists will come sunshine, for he recalls the trip over, when scarce a white-cap wave was seen; however, the date of the equinox is at hand, when adverse winds may toss the ship from side to side. An unaccountable sensation of sadness mingles with the joy of his return. Is it fear that grips his heart-strings as he watches the grimy old houses of Liverpool grow dim and dimmer? To seaward sky and

water blend their mists and obliterate the horizon. Thinking of home, a patriotic surge of feeling fires his heart; his cheeks glow and his eyes sparkle over the thought of once more seeing the green slopes of the harbor of New York. The sea murmurs in its restless onrush, and overhead the winds sigh and moan in the ropes and canvas. This soothes Wallis. He walks back and forth, living over the pleasures of his short trip abroad, where he has mingled with traveled people, and is convinced that he can never again undertake the humdrum life of an overseer, even in such an ideal place as Stirlingate. "I must locate where my future wife can enjoy advantages to which she is entitled." Dwelling on these serious thoughts, he is attracted by the voices of a bevy of young girls in merry mood.

"I say, Alice, what are you to do? I would sue that London tailor for negligence. He has your money and your coat besides."

A fair-haired girl, with a roguish twinkle in her eyes, takes up the subject. "I'd make him dance to the tune of one hundred dollars' damages. My papa wouldn't lose a day; he'd put the case in the hands of a lawyer. That's the way we do things in Chicago."

The girls surround Alice to know definitely what she intends to do. Modestly she replies: "Really, girls, I would not mind if it were any other part

of my trousseau, but that jacket belongs to my traveling-gown, and I have promised to marry directly we arrive in New York, before my fiancé must leave for the South. Now, what shall I do?"

Then she whisks herself around, saying with determination: "I will not marry until my new jacket comes." Unexpectedly, she narrowly escapes flirting herself into Wallis Bickers's arms as he advances. Wallis and Alice Grey both flush crimson. Why?

Wallis excuses himself, passes a few pleasant remarks, and slips away to master his sudden emotion at meeting the young woman who has added so much to his trip abroad. He seats himself on a coil of rope beside the mizzenmast, and watches the sun going down, uniting the overhanging clouds with a promise of coming glory,—a bright sunset. Soon the great red ball dips behind the rolling waves, in coquettish fashion rising and playing hide and seek, then, like a winged archer, rides the silver-crested expanse of water before disappearing for the night, leaving an assurance, after the darkness of night there will be light, a blaze of glory.

Wallis walks across the deck, seeking the silver lining of amber and gold that interlines every cloud. Instead, there comes over the sea a death-like pallor as the curtain of night draws together, leaving in the swinging canopy overhead one lone star that glitters and sparkles; then,

"Silently one by one, in the infinite meadows of Heaven,
Blossom the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels."

Wallis is deeply moved by this weird change from brilliant sunshine to the soft light of early night. This dance of joy by the red sun, so soon followed by funereal gloom, this the intermingling of the power of the Almighty with the natural forces of sea and air.

Surcharged as his heart is with a feeling of awe, a sensation akin to dread permeates his mind. He sits musing over the singular prophecy once pronounced over the cradle of Albina Baxter. Again and again he asks himself, "Can one frail woman bear seven trials without being broken in spirit?"

Restless in body as well as in mind, he hurriedly walks to and fro, and finds Alice Grey, wrapped like a mummy, and pinioned in her steamer chair to the deck. She is making desperate efforts to resist the sickening effects of the rocking ship. She has often boasted that she is a good sailor.

So strong is the influence of some women that each time Wallis passes the lovely Alice Grey his ambition is stimulated, and he determines to seek a wider field wherein to fulfil his aspirations, not the circumscribed life he leads at Stirlingate, egging on

to work a number of shiftless negroes. The trip abroad has opened an avenue of new ideas, new aspirations. Before long the decks are quite deserted, as reeling passengers hurry to their cabins, wishing they had never left the safety and comfort of terra-firma. The gloomy dread of a long night is occasionally appeased by the cheery voice of the watchman aloft crying " All's well!"

Wallis is a good sailor and with firm step seeks his berth with a prayer on his lips.

" Thou who madest the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, who holds the ocean in the hollow of Thy hand, grant us,"—he emphasizes the pronoun, —" grant us a safe voyage!" He sleeps, but dreams of the loved ones at home. So real is his dream, he smells the odor of late blooming roses at Stirlingate, and listens to the last dying notes of the impassioned mocking-birds; he sees once more the sloping shores of Staten Island, and notices that the summer flowers have faded; in place thereof on tree-limb and hedgerow is thrown a covering of autumnal gold, scarlet, and russet brown. Suddenly a wave dashes against the port-hole of his cabin, and awakens him.

Up from the east rises the conqueror of darkness, gleaming like a red moon in the sea mists; each white-capped wave tinted with blue, orange, red and saffron.

Day by day, the great ship moves on over the unbeaten ocean track. With favorable winds she will soon enter her port. Sailors are busy cleaning and painting, in readiness for the inspector.

During the voyage Wallis has spent many pleasant hours beside the winsome Alice Grey of Chicago. She is now a good sailor, and has entirely put from her mind the disappointment about her gown. She hesitates to upset the plans of the one man in the world she believes is foreordained to be her husband. He who came into touch with her at the very moment when heart and soul were ready to respond to his love. There could be no chance in their meeting.

The *Dorogan* has made good speed and will probably land her passengers in less than thirty-six hours. The glass points "variable," and knowing ones shake their heads with dread; they note that the captain is silent and taciturn. The wind veers round to west and northwest, and blows with great velocity.

The light-hearted Alice Grey, jesting of the glories of a storm at sea, exacts from Wallis Bickers a promise to save her, should a gale arise and the ship be wrecked. And thus they plan and banter, the one with the other, over a disaster that neither supposes will come to pass. The old ship *Dorogan* has withstood many a fierce wind; she is nearly at her

journey's end, and will bring them to New York within the next day or night.

Wallis promises faithfully to do his best to rescue Alice, if she in turn consents to rescind a determination made on account of the non-arrival of a part of her traveling-gown. Again they both flush crimson, and the resolution remains undecided. She will let him know her decision later.

Wallis Bickers goes below to care for his dumb pets chained to a ring in the floor, while the wind howls and shakes the ship from stem to stern. "Beauty," the water spaniel, with a bound of delight, springs forward to greet her master, then raising her head, sends forth a piteous howl, which, in dog fashion, expresses the animal's instinct of coming danger. "Danger ahead, eh, Beauty?" and the dog licks the hand that strokes her silky, shaggy side. The ship rocks and rolls in the trough of the sea, and to give the dogs a chance to save themselves, Wallis unfastens the fetters from their necks, and while doing this a sudden flash of light penetrates down deep into the hold of the ship; as overhead the deck is swept by the force of waves that sound like the rattle of artillery. In quick succession comes flash after flash with the roar of thunder. Shorter and shorter are the intervals between lurid streaks of lightning and thunderbolts. Wallis hurries up the gangway with his mute friends fol-

lowing, and realizing the danger, he recalls his promise to Alice Grey. He seeks her with a life buoy in hand, and while on this search a vivid glare and a crash show that the mast is struck and shivered.

Sailors, like automatic figures, hurry hither and thither, and in the weird darkness look like emissaries of the devil who have boarded the ship to complete her destruction. These men are implicitly obeying the commands of the captain, who stands firmly on the bridge, while the ship lurches from side to side, at each dip shipping a volume of water. The captain's voice is clear and ringing and inspires hope, despite the din of shrieking women and crying children.

However, in the confusion another alarm rings out which pierces every heart with dread. From all sides comes the cry, "Fire! Fire! Fire!"

With calmness the first officer musters his fire brigade. The pumps strain to their utmost capacity, groaning and creaking like living things. Buckets of water swing from hand to hand, and still tongues of fire leap fore and aft. The ship seems doomed, and in this scene of horror and confusion the captain's stern command extinguishes the last ray of hope in the bosom of both passengers and crew: "Man the life-boats!"

This indicates that the ship is to be abandoned,

although she is but twenty-four hours from New York.

While assisting women and children into the life-boats, Wallis scans each face, hoping to find the beautiful Chicago girl, whom he has promised to save in case of shipwreck. Presently, with a shriek of pain, she rushes into his arms, crying: "Save me, oh, save me!" He jerks off his coat and wraps it about her burning dress, as the steamer plunges forward and they are both swept overboard by a wave. Wallis sinks like a leaden weight, but the buoyance of a life-belt that encircles him brings him to the surface, and he seems poised on air-bubbles. Scarce knowing what he does, he spreads his arms to swim. He mastered the principle of keeping above water in his boyhood, but paddling about in an old pond is unlike withstanding the fury of ocean waves lashed by the force of a storm.

From every side come cries for help, but there is not an arm long enough to assist poor, struggling human beings knocked about like feathers before the wind.

The hissing of burning timbers, and the roar of fire, quiets down suddenly as the great ship sinks to her doom.

In mute devotion to her master, Beauty, the water spaniel, swims to Wallis's side. He welcomes her with a shout. "Beauty, find her!" Then, over the

roar of waves, he cries: "Alice Grey, where are you? Cling to me, let me save you!" There is no reply, only now and again a flash of light, as some portion of the burning, floating spars make the night more impenetrably black.

This battle with the waves is a severe test of human endurance, pitted against insurmountable difficulties. Wallis is still above water, and as wave after wave dashes over his head he feels something grip his foot. Despite the buoyancy of his life-preserver, this monster of the deep, as he supposes it to be, threatens to drag him down. Instinctively he struggles to be free. With a mighty effort, Wallis rides the crest of a wave, as a flash of light reveals a woman clinging to his feet. It is Alice Grey. In piteous accents she cries: "Save me, oh, God! I can't hold another moment."

With heroic effort Wallis clutches her outspread arm, and draws it within the circle of his life-belt, saying, "Do not struggle, for if you do we must both go down."

Alice recognizes his voice and cries, "You promised to save me!"

"I'll do my best, only try to be brave. Help may come with the morning light. I have my arm over a floating spar."

Alice Grey is soothed. She believes if any one in the world can save her, he can, he so manly and brave.

And supported, buoyed up by the life-preserver, her natural powers relax, while she imagines her mother's arms are about her. The angry sea kisses her purple lips, that with childish simplicity murmur, "Hold me tight, please"; then she swoons into unconsciousness.

Wallis, almost exhausted, clings to his burden, limp and buffeted by the waves, for there is nothing he can do to revive Alice. As the hours pass, he reads page after page of his short life written with the indelible point of memory, line after line aglow with visions of happiness, when he shall clasp the woman of his choice to his heart and claim her as his bride.

In a mere instant of time, we are told, at death our thoughts often traverse and retraverse the beaten track of our past, hedged in at one turn by love or hatred, joy or sorrow, hope or fear.

And thus it happens the clear morning light rises above the horizon like a great red ball of fire, blinding Wallis, whose strength is well-nigh exhausted. He tightens his grip of the girl he holds, and he seems to see great black lines against the sun with these words, "Prepare to meet thy God," as if written with the sharp point of a great pen. His mortal frame is exhausted, while the emotions of his soul are keen and thrilling.

CHAPTER V

A WOMAN'S VOW

" Believe me, Sir,
It carries a rare form, but 'tis a spirit."
THE TEMPEST.

AROUND the mountain heights in Virginia November mists curl and condense into rain.

The fields are bare, for the gleaning is over; tobacco leaves hang in close touch for the drying process; large banks of sweet potatoes are safely covered from frost, waiting the roasting time, when all Southern fireplaces are heaped with glowing oaken coals that roast and mellow the sweet yams.

At Stirlingate Mrs. Bickers is making great preparations for her son's return. The finest gobbler of the flock is doomed, and in imitation of the old French women in the Place de la Concorde, Paris, Albina promises to drop a stitch in her knitting when a blow of Zenas' hatchet tumbles a gobbler's head into the basket. She is counting the hours before Wallis' ringing whistle will echo in the spacious halls. Excited and nervous with expectation, she continues to use her best efforts in teaching her

black pupils. In this excitable mood she tears open a New York paper, sure that the *Dorogan* has arrived. Great headlines flash out: "The *Dorogan* burned at sea. Only a few passengers saved."

Dazed and bewildered, she dismisses her scholars for the day, and hastens to Mrs. Bickers for news, but not a word has she heard of the safety of her son.

Young, and full of hope, Albina convinces herself that Wallis is one of the rescued. She recalls his great muscular strength, and feels sure if any one could ride the waves to safety he has done so.

As the days follow each other in quick succession, bringing no news, her courage fails, and overwhelming feelings of dread encompass her. The frail reed of hope in her soul is slowly bending to the breaking point.

Meanwhile, search yachts leave New York harbor to rescue the survivors of the *Dorogan*, but their mission ends in disappointment, for they find only lifeless forms drifting with the tide. Securing mementoes of the dead, the bodies are consigned to coral couches in the depths of the sea.

A telegram, slightly blurred, found in a Russian leather bag attached to a young girl's belt, gives the clue to two of the dead. It reads:

"ALICE. I will join you aboard the *Dorogan*.

I have the precious package, also an English dog for your acceptance."

"WALLIS B . . . . . .

"London, Oct. 21st."

A reporter, Jubal Lane, anxious to increase the sale of his paper, with vivid imagination seizes upon the fact that this girl was found tightly clasped in the arms of a man with a life-preserver about him, cleverly weaves a love story about the incident, and with telling words depicts the thrilling scene on the angry sea; pictures lips sealed together with the kiss of love in death.

Albina reads this touching account, her eyes dimmed with tears. The spelling of the name Wallis in the telegram is unusual, and so with a quickened pulse she checks off the six symbols. They spell Bickers. "Wallis Bickers," she exclaims, "my Wallis, and Alice Grey he met in London. My Wallis." A hot flush mantles her cheeks as she tries to re-read the account, sure that her eyes have deceived her. "Wallis has forgotten his vows of love to me," she says, slowly, "else, why this telegram to a girl he has known less than a month? 'An English dog for your acceptance.' He has revoked the gift from me, to Alice Grey. She, whose soft brown eyes, and mellow voice reminded of me! Oh, it cannot be! I'm dreaming a horrid dream!" Again, she opens

the crumpled paper, and once more checks off the six symbols on her fingers. "Bickers. Yes, it's true. He also mentions the precious package of cotton seed he crossed the ocean to secure."

In a frenzy of jealous feeling she dashes the paper from her. "He, the traitor, has been away less than three months, and in that short space has proved false to his vows of love for me. He!" she almost hisses the pronoun through her teeth. "He —the man foolishly believed to be the very soul of honor."

In the quiet of many sleepless nights, the spiritual influence of her godly mother comes to her like a balm, and she murmurs, "Until the dawn of the millenium women, weak, loving women, will pin their faith to the words of a man; the idle words of his love. I am no exception." Gradually the color fades from her cheeks and her deep-set brown eyes seem to sink deeper into their sockets. She continues to teach, however, but all enthusiasm for her work has died and she realizes her inertness when her little black maid asks: "Ain't Miss Albina gwine to gib de yaller bird any seed? He wings is drapped, an' he don't sing no moe."

Albina has forgotten to feed her pet, the parting gift of Wallis Bickers.

"Walzie, my sweet Walzie, forgive me? Walzie, will you sing for me?" She fills the seed cup with

trembling hands, bitter thoughts of her faithless lover filling her heart. Indeed, the sun of her life has gone down, down on the horizon of her hope, and a great red moon of disaster rides ever in view to recall the prediction of the Indian squaw. She dwells on the fact: "I will not need seven trials to break the slender reed of my life. Already my sun has turned to blood, surely there can be no glorious sunset for me."

In the midst of these cruel and oppressive hours there are moments when her troubled heart again hears her mother's voice, like the gentle breathing of the wind over rushes on the water's edge. A faint hope sometimes steals over her, that perhaps it is fiction. Perhaps, after all, she thinks, Wallis is safe, and if safe, surely, surely he is true to his vows.

Mrs. Baxter writes, imploring her daughter to resign her duties in the school and come to Santa Barbara, where her father has removed from San Francisco. "Come," she writes, "come where the Pacific gently laps the sandy beach and sunshine and roses vie with each other in brilliancy; where one breathes the refreshing fragrance of pine, mingled with the odor of lemon and orange blossoms, while drowsy honeybees hum their sleepy murmur so calming to tired nerves."

After a long and wearisome journey Albina

reaches her father's home, bright with flowers. Satan's emissaries continue their efforts to entice her into the abyss of despair, but she determines they shall have a hard battle. Gradually, Albina is convinced that Wallis Bickers has not been rescued. With courage born of Christian fortitude, her spirit bows to the inevitable, but does not break. Her mind frequently reverts to the thought of the kiss of love that sealed her lover's lips cold in death. The memory rankles in her heart, and causes her many sleepless nights. The sunlight of perfect peace might be rekindled in her soul with the assurance that her lover was true to his vows.

As the weeks go by, black lines encircle her eyes, and the far-away look that characterized her as a child is intensified, and her parents note this. Sitting under the orange trees, Albina asks with feeling:

"Mother dear, do you think the cruel heartburnings I have now will cling to me after death? In Paradise when I meet Wallis and Alice Grey arm in arm, even there will my soul cry out in agony over his faithlessness?"

Mrs. Baxter looks up from her father's old Bible open on her lap. "My daughter, has your mother's careful training been of no avail? In this your time of trial do cling to the words of this book." Her voice is full of sympathy while she turns the

leaves, saying: "In heaven there is neither husband nor lover, but we shall be one in the bosom of the dear Lord and Master."

"Then, I do not want to go there! If I'm to be so stupid as not to know my earthly friends from my faithless lover it is no place of joy and peace for me. Do you suppose I could look at Wallis caressing Alice, and not be filled with indignation? No! I could not, nor do I want to."

Albina plucks the petals from an early blooming rose her father has brought her, and scatters them over her frock.

Mrs. Baxter remains silent, for in moments of intense feeling one's thoughts are best uninterrupted. The mind at rest, the clouds may blow over.

Day by day, Albina listens to the ebb and flow of the waves, as they wash on the sandy shore in the rear of her father's house. At times lashed into fury by western gales, the incoming tide seems to say, "False, false; he is false!" The sea, sun-flecked by day, at night sighs and mourns, and seems to hint that away off in a shell-encrusted cavern of the Atlantic Ocean Wallis Bickers lies enfolding to his bosom Alice Grey.

With the realization of this crushing truth, the bruised reed of her love bends again almost to the breaking point. There is but one cure for Albina's malady, one chance to restore her equanimity, and

that is in work for others. Her philanthropic mother advises her beloved child to join the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and she consents.

California's rainy season is about over, and for six months not a drop of rain, not a spray of water will fall to moisten the thirsty earth. For half the year mammoth clouds have emptied themselves in downpours, or in gentle showers; now, there is to be a time of unremitting sunshine. A perfect spring has followed on the heels of the winter, and Santa Barbara is about to have her first flower show; a Mardi Gras in nature's art, instead of the gay tinsel of New Orleans' Creole fête.

The town is thronged with visitors, and the principal street is a moving mass of human beings, hurrying from side to side, with baskets of posies, ready for the battle of flowers. Even Jonah Baxter is burdened with an armful of roses. No one enjoys gathering a nosegay of blossoms more than he. Accustomed now to the climatic peculiarity of his adopted country, he ceases to wonder how vegetation flourishes and flowers bloom without rain. His one anxiety is in regard to the health of his visibly fading "California poppy." She has promised to go with him to witness the carnival of flowers; to see the gayly-decked carriages pass up and down the street with happy occupants enthroned in the midst of their favorite flowers.

The morning is perfect, and the air sweet and invigorating. Seaward not a cloud flecks the soft blue sky, and inland the thirsty land glows with a wealth of gold, orange- and lemon-tinted poppies that bloom in wasteful prodigality.

In a day or two, Albina is to turn her face away from the sweet enchantments of her Western home, and to bend her energy to the work of rescuing the fallen. Surrounded by a babel of evil in the slums of a great city, this work will be trying to one so young, and one with the allurements of wealth to induce idleness. Albina, however, is staunchly loyal to her early determination, the determination that first showed its vital force, when as a child she begged to be allowed to help "Uncle Tom" in his abject misery. The Civil War has unfettered his chains of servitude; and now she seeks to free others bound by the degrading desire for strong drink, a cruel servitude.

The hilarity of the flower show is at its height, when, unnoticed, Albina slips away from her father and the crowd. She longs for the quiet of the seashore. She is firm in her determination to banish all harrowing recollections of the disaster to the ill-fated *Dorogan*, when her young life was robbed of its sweet dreams of joy and happiness. Alone, she stands on the shore, gazing westward, where imperceptibly sky and water mingle. The tide is creep-

ing treacherously near and nearer to her shoe tips as it caresses the willing sand.

In a trance of thought, Albina stands lost to the tangible things of earth. Peering through the indescribable splendor of the overarched sky, and down beyond the embroidered azure of the horizon that sparkles with the glint of the sun like gleams of gold and yellow, her imagination, enhanced by a spiritual influence, now discerns, as it were, a reef of snow-white coral, and resting as if asleep, lies Wallis. Silvery fish play about his form, and seaweed drapes his couch, but no fair young creature lies enfolded to his bosom. She strains her eyes to be sure that he lies there alone. Assured of this, she calls aloud: "Wallis! Wallis! tell me, are you true to your vows of love for me? Answer me yes, or no. I will be content, whatever it be."

She listens, and imperceptibly the angels of peace and consecration draw near, and the white-winged throng infuse into Albina's mind a new strength, a strength that nerves her heart, and brings a smile to her sad face. For she feels convinced that her lover is true to his vows.

Then, Albina, in a trance of joy, kneels upon the soft sand, and lifts her hands to heaven. "Ocean, cease your tireless moan. I would have my beloved Wallis hear my vow. Oh, my God, here in the clear sunlight of love, I dedicate my life and my wealth

to the comfort of the sorrowing, the help of the needy. Once flowers bloomed in my earthly garden, but the greedy Atlantic has swallowed up my last hope of happiness. Henceforth my energy shall be used for the benefit of others. O God, keep me as a chosen medium of Thy power."

In the trees nearby there sounds the twitter of birds consulting over the nest for a coming brood, and suddenly a mighty shout rends the air, as a chorus of rejoicing echoes the acclaim that the blue ribbon decorates the chosen carriage of the carnival of roses.

CHAPTER VI

ALBINA'S FOURTH TRIAL

"Of all the treasures that God has bestowed upon mankind, sympathy is the purest jewel."

After many struggles the indomitable pluck of the Western pioneer, coupled with the energy of the East, has encircled America with steel rails. The last spike, a golden one, is driven into place; and the two sections—East and West—shake hands in rejoicing over the union of their iron roadway.

At best, railroad traveling is irksome, and Albina, to break the journey, accepts an invitation to spend a month or more with a school friend residing in Chicago, that wonderful city that by magical hands sprang into being in a night. Where Indians once wielded their tomahawks and settlers built their huts, is now a modern city, up to date in vice, as well as prosperity. Good and evil flourish side by side. Albina has quite resolved to locate and begin her chosen work with the Women's Christian Temperance Union in this Western city.

Albina is devotedly attached to her friend's baby boy, Bennie Bowles, for he diverts her mind, and so

she prolongs her visit. Mrs. Bowles is constantly "on the go," but she has never prevailed upon her visitor to mingle in her gay life. She prefers to cuddle Bennie in her arms and lull him to sleep with old-time crooning songs learned in Virginia:

"Oh, my dearest May,
You're lovely as the day.
Your eyes so bright
They shine at night
When the moon has gone away.

(Chorus)
Then row away, row
O'er the water so blue.
Like a feather we'll float
In our gum-tree canoe."

The summer has passed rapidly, and it is now the first week of October. From the prairies come hot blasts of air, as if blown from a furnace, increasing the concentrated heat of the city. Bennie is feverish, restless, and fretful. Mrs. Bowles, like many other society women, has cast from her the sweetest joy of motherhood, those precious moments when a baby hand rests upon its mother's bosom, and lips like velvet seek the God-given well-springs of life. Bennie is relegated to a foster-mother who but recently arrived from Ireland, and, not being accustomed to the heat of America, is ill. The footman goes in search of fresh milk for the baby.

"Good evening, Mistress O'Leary. The little marster is crying, and not even Miss Albina can sing him to sleep. Will you milk me a quart of fresh milk?"

"Faith and sure it's a late time to be comin' for milk and the night as hot as the devil's kitchen."

Mrs. O'Leary places her round-globed spectacles on the table, and mops her face with a red handkerchief, saying, "It's late to be a-milking, but sure my mother's heart can't let a baby cry for a drop of milk."

With a milking pail and a small lamp she enters the cow stall. A plaintive Moo! Moo! greets her. On Daisy's nose are beads of moisture, while persistently she laps her rough tongue into her nostrils; her tail in constant motion switching the flies from her sides. One unfortunate switch, and over goes the lamp—and in an instant the straw is ablaze.

Church bell after church bell sounds the alarm, for the fire spreads rapidly. From the prairies rushes a hot blast, which, meeting a current of air, lifts sheets of fire from street to street, and they roll about like waves of the sea. The leaves of burning books blow about like falling stars. House after house totters into ruins, sending forth a rumbling sound as of distant thunder, a roar of wild beasts turned loose to riot in exasperated fury.

From every direction come the screams and cries

of human beings, dazed and frantic; or helpless, and hopeless. In the densely crowded alley-ways where the poor herd like cattle, the bewilderment of the helpless and excitement of the children touch many a stout heart.

In this veritable carnival of hell many daredevils risk freely their lives with the hope of securing money or valuables, while strong men, suffocated by smoke and hot vapors, leave the richest treasures of home, conscious of but one desire—a place of safety. The work of the fire engines is mere child play; and police officers fail to cope with the emissaries of Satan.

Realizing the danger, Albina hugs little Bennie Bowles to her bosom and seeks his father and mother, without avail. Beside the lake seems the only place one can hope to breathe, and while standing there the distressed voice of a mother startles Albina. Her first thought prompts her to hurry away, but, realizing her life is dedicated to the relief of the distressed, she gropes in the smoky street, guided by the pleading voice which cries, "Captain, mate, some one find my daughter. She is lost, and I am manning the boat trying to save her." Then, the same voice pleads, "Alice, Alice Grey, answer your mother! Where are you?" Instantly the sting of that green-eyed monster, jealousy, sends the blood tingling through Albina's veins. Only a simple

name, but one closely connected with the crushing of her own fondest hopes in life.

Finding the woman, Albina whispers in her ear, "Will you be comforted when I tell you Alice is safe? She is where no flames can reach her."

This comforting assurance is greeted by a meaningless laugh.

"You say she is safe, safe in this blazing furnace? She would be safer in mid-ocean. Oh, help me to man the boat. Now then, let us row, row for our lives."

Gradually, Mrs. Grey's voice grows feeble, and a numbness creeps over her prostrate body, for the candle of life flickers, and the flame goes out forever, as she whispers softly, "Alice, Alice dear, we are safe."

Albina in the meantime has sought the lake-shore for the safety of the sleeping babe in her arms. She essays to rouse the boy, but Bennie Bowles gives no sign. He is asleep, and will open his eyes in the green pasture lands of Heaven.

Standing there dumb with amazement, Albina sees the setting sun across the lake gleaming like a red moon through the weird and hazy atmosphere of a great city that is now a heap of glowing coals and desolated homes.

CHAPTER VII

ALBINA'S FAITH AWAKENS

"When my heart is crushed with anguish
And the waters reach the brim;
Faith can sing the mighty chorus,
Like some glorious battle hymn."

SIMPSON.

SOON after Bennie's death Albina leaves Chicago for New York, with the hope that her unstrung nerves may regain vigor. On the horizon of her horoscope, the red moon of her destiny never goes down, never gives a respite, never promises better days when free from trials.

With the strength of a consecrated life she engages in work in the slums of America's greatest city. After some years of work, mentally weary, the natural consequence of her work, she plans to visit her father's home. Varied trials have bent, but not broken, her supple mind; a steadfast faith in God, the anchor sustains her under all circumstances. Daily forgetful of herself, she is ever on the alert, watching the downward career of those who have lost the rudder of their life-boat and must be

swamped unless a helping hand is extended to them. Others, she finds plunging headlong into forbidden pleasures. In their garden of life roses once bloomed; now, their hopes for the future are dead. With delicate intuition, too subtle for words, Albina pleads with strong men whose red and swollen eyes betray their besetting sin; she tries to awaken their minds to touch the chords of love in their memory, with the gentle pleadings of a mother, or a sister's tender words.

Her plans are finally arranged for a rest at home, away from the greedy hordes of the metropolis, when a telegram announces a tragedy on the peaceful, sun-flecked streets of Santa Barbara. Hastening to her mother's side, she finds that her father has been seriously injured by runaway horses, and thrown against a telegraph pole in front of his beautiful home.

The metaphorical reed of her life is now bent to the breaking point. With wild pleadings she implores her father to call her his "California poppy," but he gives no response. Like the great soul of Stonewall Jackson, he crosses the river, and rests under the shade of the trees of Paradise.

After some weeks, Albina feels that both her mother and herself need new scenes, new associations. She eventually induces Mrs. Baxter to leave her home where the deadly telegraph pole is ever in

sight. They plan to settle permanently in New York. Before leaving, beside her father's newly made grave, Albina renews her vows of dedication to the welfare of others. She is now an heiress, but simple in dress and manners. Not even strangers call her Miss Baxter. It is "Miss Albina," that is all.

Neither time nor money can ever drown the requiem of her dead hopes, and each year on the anniversary of the sinking of the *Dorogan* she allows herself to be sad. One evening in the three hundred and sixty-five she permits herself to dwell upon what might have been, but for the red moon of misfortune which follows her. On the morrow she will bravely stifle all reminiscences of the past, with hope that the glorious going down of her sun may be "bright as day" in her work for others. During the bitterly cold months of the winter, and with the advent of spring flowers, she redoubles her energy; nor does her work cease until the heat compels her to seek, with her mother, a respite in the White Mountains.

Refreshed from their outing, Mrs. Baxter and her daughter are once more in their Madison Avenue home, and shut away in her own room Albina, on the foggy, dismal night of November fifth, gives free scope to her thoughts; thoughts such as every woman may indulge in; recalls how in the fervor of a strong love Wallis embraced her in parting, vow-

ing to be true to her until death. For the moment not a shadow obscures her faith, her soul is in sweet communion with that of her dead lover; and she convinces herself that he was always loyal to her.

This sad reverie is interrupted by a telegram, which reads: "The 'Wallis Bickers' cot in the Richmond (Virginia) hospital, endowed by Colonel Furgerson, is occupied, for the first time, by a frail young Southern girl." Later there comes an urgent request for help, a call for Albina to visit a dying man. She follows the young lad who seeks her aid. They go up two flights, into a small room on Eleventh Street, East, near the river, and then she realizes the urgency of the case. The house is dark and cold, and the sound of drunken revelry comes from the rooms below.

With the unmistakable air of good birth, a woman rises to welcome Albina. This, her only home, has not a comfort, not a handful of coal, and only one small oil stove for cooking and heating purposes. On the table lies a half loaf of stale bread, the remains of a hasty supper. Everything shows the most abject poverty, yet shows, too, the care of a refined hand. The utmost neatness and cleanliness prevail. The woman's face is lined with deep furrows, evidently not stamped there by the sculpturing hand of time; they reveal the signet of suffering. Though she is yet in the prime of life, her abun-

dant hair is snow white. In her arms she holds a golden-haired baby, whose father, by reason of a courteous manner, and gifted pen, was once an ornament to society. The victim of an appetite for strong drink, he lies now on a bed of death, in a home of poverty, and he has dragged his wife and child down to poverty.

It is none other than Jubal Lane, the talented New York newspaper reporter who some years ago graphically depicted the scenes connected with the loss of the *Dorogan*, and he, too, deciphered the telegram to "Alice." Mr. Lane tries to greet Albina, but his tongue is heavy. As the night grows old his spirit passes through the gate which opens but once for king or peasant.

Touched by the condition of Mrs. Lane and her baby, Albina takes them to her home, where in a short time the little boy, properly nourished, sweetly coos with infantile delight, and day by day, in moments of tender retrospection, Albina assures herself that the spirit of Bennie Bowles has returned in another form, and wearing other features, so the baby wins her love.

Mrs. Lane, too, proves a good worker in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and is made welcome in Mrs. Baxter's home. No wonder that in time the lines about her face are less deep, and her cheeks pink with the bloom of health, in vivid con-

trast with her former pallor, the condition of a poorly nourished body. Her womanly heart shows her appreciation of her blessings by devotion to Albina, and her life work.

Prosperity tests a man or woman far more than adversity. One who can withstand the enticements of pleasure, can bear the pangs of hunger.

Mrs. Lane proves her strength of mind both in the valley of want and on the mountain-top of plenty. There is really no experience which teaches us successfully to minister to the needs of others like the fact that we ourselves have suffered. Albina and Mrs. Lane, akin in suffering, sit beside an evening lamp reading, while the golden-haired baby sleeps upon its mother's knee.

Presently Albina looks up.

"Mrs. Lane, I have wondered——" She pauses, for her voice suddenly fails. Then she controls herself and continues: "I wonder if our baby,"—she always speaks of the child with this loving pronoun,—"has a middle name, and if so, are you willing to use it?"

Mrs. Lane is surprised by this singular request, but she lays her book down and gently strokes the temples of her sleeping boy, saying, "Wallis!" She says it with simple sweetness. "Wallis! I love the sound of each syllable, but, Miss Albina, to please you,—our best friend,—I will use his other name."

Saying this, she presses the child to her bosom, and kisses it. She is struggling with memories of the past, and replies: "Our baby's name is Wallis Bee, after a dear friend of my girlhood."

A slight tremor shakes Albina's voice as she asks, "Mrs. Lane, why do you spell baby's name with 'i-s' instead of the Scotch 'a-c-e'? Is there a reason for this mode of spelling a common name?"

Mrs. Lane hesitates for a moment, as a keen and poignant pain rushes through her heart.

"Miss Albina, do not ask me to reveal this hidden secret. I have no right to mar the sweet tranquillity of your useful life by uncovering the tragedy of my own. It is now buried forever; let it rest. Kindest of friends, you already know that the years of my married life were full of weariness and sadness, and sometimes I am convinced that it was my just due, for the thoughtlessness and apparent heartlessness of my girlhood. Oh, I was of such a jealous disposition!"

Mrs. Lane weeps, while Albina tries to soothe her, saying: "Let me share your trials with you, thus making them lighter? Remember when Pandora opened her box all the evils escaped, but Hope remained. Let us then retain this choice privilege, and though the past may have been dark for both of us, we can still hope, and cheer others." A tinge of color rushes over Albina's usually pale face as

the recollection of her own suffering comes to mind. Suppressing the emotion that racks her heart, she says: "We must be self-sacrificing, else our gifts are valueless."

Mrs. Lane brightens up at these words of encouragement. "Yes, I will tell you why I named my little Wallis Bee after one from whom I still long to have news. True, I am a heart-broken woman, and but for this sweet gift of a baby I should to-day be inconsolable. Miss Albina, in my girlhood I was betrothed to a young man, a graduate of Amherst College. He was an only child, and his father was dead. I loved him with all the force of my nature, and some years ago, when he went to Europe, I promised him with my farewell kiss that I would marry him as soon as he returned. While he was away, I was like one forsaken; I had no relatives in the North, and so our engagement was kept a secret even from our dearest friends. We neither of us had many relations. To human eyes not a cloud flecked our horizon. We were madly in love with each other. I recall to this day that the moon shone in full glory as we walked up Fifth Avenue, the night before he sailed, when we each vowed to be true until death. Alas! Miss Albina, I who made that vow, broke it in a thoughtless and unpardonable manner."

Albina is touched by Mrs. Lane's condemnation of herself, and she tries to comfort her, but Mrs.

Lane replies: "No, dear friend, I deserve no pity. God knows my sunless days are my just reward."

Then she goes on with her story: "It was time for my lover to return, and a happy-hearted girl I was as I went from store to store selecting my wedding gowns, for we were to be married ere the new year was born.

"Late in October, I had a few hurried lines from my fiancé stating that he had decided to sail earlier than November, the first date fixed upon. He said not one word about his joy over the prospect of our meeting, nor yet of our marriage. Naturally jealous, I re-read the letter, hoping to find a note of gladness that he would soon be with me, but there was not a word; only a postscript to say how pleasant his trip would be, for 'Alice' was booked by the same ship. I asked myself who this Alice could be, that she could make my lover happy? A shiver of coming evil rushed over me, and I drew near the grate, for we had our first fire of the season. And there, in the midst of the glowing coal, I distinctly saw outlined a woman's face with a broad-brimmed hat. Instantly I snatched up the poker and crushed in the head, saying, 'It serves you right, Alice, you who have supplanted me.'"

Mrs. Lane shudders as she recalls her youthful impetuosity. Her little boy stirs in his sleep, and as she hugs him to her bosom, she asks: "Miss Al-

bina, do you believe that our intuition carries our minds far beyond the finite, and reveals to us the secrets of the future? I was convinced that picture in the fire was sent to warn me of my rival, Alice.

"My eyes were opened to the fallacy of this theory, after it was too late. Miss Albina, do you remember some years ago the old vessel *Dorogan* was lost at sea, within twenty-four hours out from New York? My Wallis was booked as one of her passengers."

Albina makes an effort to rise from her chair, but turns deadly pale and sinks back into her seat, saying, "Oh, God, help us!"

With pain Mrs. Lane sees the effect of her words. She leans forward, saying: "Miss Albina, it is cruel for me to oppress you with the story of my life. Try, dear friend, to overlook my girlish impetuosity. I never had the tender care of a mother, and was spoiled and petted by my father."

Albina is thinking of her own lover in a new light, that of a heartless flirt. It is now evident that he was engaged to Mrs. Lane—Jessie Lea of Maryland—before the renewal of their acquaintance at Stirlingate, where he wooed and won her young heart. Later, in London, evidently he sought the affection of Alice Grey, only to clasp her to his bosom in death. Indignant over this revelation, she assures herself that the traitor Wallis well de-

served his fate for toying with the hearts of three women.

Mrs. Lane gently strokes her baby's curls, as if the very touch gives her fresh courage to continue:

"My flush of jealousy cooled as I scanned the daily papers for news of the *Dorogan*. I counted the hours till she was due, for I was desperately in love with Wallis. Imagine my consternation one morning, reading in a New York paper this news: 'The *Dorogan* has been lost at sea; only a few passengers saved by a sailing-vessel.' It was a terrible shock, but I continued to read the morning and evening papers, hoping to find Wallis's name in the lists of the saved. You know, when the heart is young it is buoyant and hopeful. I was sure that Wallis was stranded on some lone island, like Robinson Crusoe was, and I was confident that he was thinking of me. 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick,' and I became restless and nervous, and day after day I called at one of the newspaper offices for additional news. Mr. Jubal Lane, the principal reporter, always came himself to give me the details. He was touched by my distress, and gained my permission to call at my boarding place, in case he heard anything of importance. After the search yachts returned I knew I could not hope any longer. Then it was that a telegram was found in a dead girl's leathern bag that burnt itself into my mind

as if graven there with a fine steel point. It read: 'Alice—I will join you aboard the *Dorogan*. I have the precious package, also an English dog for your acceptance,' and it was signed, 'Wallis B . . . . . .' For a moment I believe I lost consciousness, so fiercely did jealousy burn in my heart. The graphically written article depicted the two enfolded in each other's arms, as if they were lovers. Was this man who signed the telegram with dots my Wallis, who used symbols always to his name in my letters? With trembling fingers I checked them off, and to my horror they spelt my darling's name. This fact, or tragedy, seems to have fixed itself in my mind, much as a murderer is photographed upon the retina of his victim's eye; for, even to this day, it comes to my view."

Albina's head droops low, and lower, and finally rests on the edge of the table, and her hands fall like leaden weights into her lap. The recollection of all she has suffered through the perfidy of one man, for the moment dulls her sensibility. She raises her head in an instant, resolved not to be unnerved by the details Mrs. Lane has narrated. Up to this hour she has never fully convinced herself that Wallis was untrue to her. To-night she spurns the very thought of a man who could stoop to make love to three women at the same time, showing himself utterly unworthy of any true-hearted

woman's love. The expression of her face, usually as mobile as the sea, represents now a cold statue in marble on which the sculptor depicts proud defiance, and makes the face insensible to the tender emotion of love, pity, or sympathy.

Mrs. Lane is dwelling on the thoughts of her own experience, and picks up the thread of her story where she was interrupted, and she goes on to the end, not noticing Albina's fixed stare, an expression unlike her gentle, loving solicitude and interest for others in distress.

"Miss Albina, can you realize the weary hours of anxiety, hoping against hope, for news of my beloved Wallis? When he was depicted as the lover of another, I put on a mask of indifference, crushing my feelings, and entered society. Among the young people Mr. Lane was a great favorite. In his vivacious presence, the remembrance of my former happiness was obscured as if by a thick veil. Mr. Lane's magnetic power held me, and a cold cynicism enveloped my being. Later, to my horror, I detected that he ferreted out my love for Wallis, and he fanned into flame my jealousy of Alice."

The recollection of her broken life fills Mrs. Lane with emotion, and she bows her head.

"Oh! Miss Albina, need I repeat the sequel; you know somewhat of the hours of bitter remorse that followed. It will ever remain a mystery how, and

why, I married Mr. Lane in the bridal robes prepared for my nuptials with Wallis. Soon, Mr. Lane took to drink to drown the injustice done me. Miss Albina, have you ever felt the power of a hypnotist?" and Mrs. Lane looks up with a questioning appeal in her eyes.

A cathedral clock on the mantel-shelf chimes the hour of ten, its deep soft tones echoing through the room, over which the pall of death seems to have settled. The child stretches its little arms above its curly head, and thus recalled to that first question, about the baby's name, his mother says:

"At Amherst College there were two students who spelled their names Wallis with the 'i-s' instead of the usual Wallace, and so, to distinguish them, one was called Wallis B. This was my Wallis, and in fun he added six symbols to his name as his hive of bees. You know how little it takes to make merriment with a lot of college boys. Miss Albina, by some magical power you have secured the key to the innermost chamber of my heart, and now I am freely spreading out the most sacred jewels of my life secrets for you to ponder over. It may ease my heart-ache."

In deep contrition, the outcome of a painful experience, Mrs. Lane goes on:

"Miss Albina, it was not my Wallis who was lost at sea, but——"

Albina grasps her hand, and holds it in a vise-like grip. She does not wait for the finished sentence: "Wallis was not lost at sea? Then he still lives! Oh, Mrs. Lane, tell me where he is!"

Mrs. Lane wonders at this fervor, but attributing it to Miss Albina's tender, sympathetic heart, she replies feelingly: "No, my Wallis did not go down with the ill-fated *Dorogan*."

Albina brightens up with hope for the future, and her thoughts travel rapidly. A sudden enthusiasm rouses her spirit. Despite the lapse of years, Wallis may yet be rescued from the barren island on which she believes him stranded. She resolves, "I will fit up a yacht and with my mother go in search of him." And she asks herself, "To what better use can I apply my father's wealth? How serve the human family more effectively than to go to one in peril?"

There are times when we soar in spirit above the environment of our earthly bodies. The spiritual having gained the ascendency, we leave behind us every thought of the groveling cares of earth. Such is Albina's mood as she pulls herself together with the resolve to go in search of Wallis Bickers, who is still alive. Every atom of jealousy in her heart is extinguished by the hope of seeing him again. True love is more enduring than jealousy. The two cannot exist for the same person, even as water and oil in a vessel remain two distinct components. With

love uppermost in her soul, Albina forgets the heart-burnings she has endured. She thinks to confide the story of her life to Mrs. Lane, but a spirit of true heroism admonishes her to guard her secret a little longer.

The house is wrapped in silence; an occasional cab rumbles past in the street; or the quick pace of a doctor's gig tells of the needs of a sufferer. Now and again sounds the heavy tread of a policeman walking his beat in search of evil-doers.

In the muffled quiet Mrs. Lane says: "At the beginning of February my lover, Wallis Bentone, returned to New York, and although he knew I was the wife of Jubal Lane, he came to see me. Then it was that I learned the truth of the telegram which he sent to his cousin Alice Grey, whose tailor had neglected to forward the coat to her traveling-dress. She wrote asking Wallis Bentone to get the package, and meet her at Liverpool. As he was so soon to sail, he changed his passage to the *Dorogan*, but a delayed London express caused him to miss the steamer. The tragic death of his cousin Alice decided him to prolong his stay abroad, and he wrote me saying he felt it wiser not to marry until his aunt, Mrs. Grey, recovered her mind, unsettled by exposure and the loss of her only child. This letter, and subsequent ones, never reached me. You can judge why. New York papers circulate in Europe,

and Wallis read the announcement of my marriage to Mr. Lane, which explained to him my silence. You see, Miss Albina, it was not my betrothed, but that other Amherst man, who, I have heard, might have saved himself, but for his manly effort to rescue a young lady he met in London, who was also a passenger aboard the ill-fated ship."

Within the past hour deep emotions have stirred Albina's heart. Pity for a widow, tender love for a baby, scorn for a man, then hope—intense hope and a belief that she may yet see her beloved Wallis.

In the vortex of contending feeling the lamp of love is once more relit, never again to be obscured by mistrust. Her lover, Wallis Bickers, shines forth in the light of a true and noble man—worthy to be mourned by her. This is the supreme hour of her life. A radiant expression overspreads her usually sad face, as the angel of perfect peace lifts her thoughts out of the slough of despond.

Henceforth the sea may howl and toss its waves mountain high, wailing a requiem mass for the dead who rest in the depths. Albina now mourns as one with a strong hope of reunion with a faithful lover.

Oppressed by recollections of her error, Mrs. Lane finishes her sad story.

" Miss Albina, remorse has embittered every hour of my life. You see my hair is prematurely grey."

Then, catching the inspiration of Albina's new joy, she hugs her baby to her bosom. "God gave me this child to comfort me, and with Mr. Lane's knowledge I named him Wallis Bee. I must not forget to tell you that Mr. Wallis Bickers was reported engaged to a wealthy Virginia girl, but believing the story my husband wrote of the betrothal of Mr. Bickers and Alice Grey, rumor says she shut herself up in a convent, and donned the white veil of a nun. Knowing the falsity of Mr. Lane's story as I do, I would go a long distance, and make any sacrifice, to assure that Southern girl of the error; unfortunately, however, I have never heard her name."

Albina gives a quick start, then, with a tone of perfect composure, she asks: "Mrs. Lane, will you trust me to ferret out and perform that sacred duty?"

"Gladly, Miss Albina."

Albina takes the sleeping child's hand and kisses it, saying, "Our precious little Wallis Bee! God bless him."

Once more it gives her pleasure to repeat that sacred name, which has rarely passed her lips in years.

Little Wallis Bee Lane opens his eyes and smiles a sweet, artless baby smile that shows the dimples in his cheeks. The two women peer into his face,

and his mother thinks she hears him say, "Ma-ma." As the clock ticks its ceaseless rounds

"Two faces o'er the baby bent,
Two hands above the head were locked,
Those pressed each other, while they looked
They watched a life that Love had sent.
O! solemn hour!
O! hidden power!"

And now, Albina's kindly heart reverts to the other sufferer in this human tragedy. "Mr. Wallis Bentone! What of him, Mrs. Lane? Does he still live?"

"Alas, Miss Albina, I do not know. Wallis Bentone bade me good-bye in New York, on his way to Chicago to visit his aunt, Mrs. Grey, whose mind was greatly enfeebled by her experiences on the *Dorogan.* She constantly asks if her daughter is safe. I have also read that Mrs. Grey was found dead on the street after the Chicago fire. Indirectly I have heard that Wallis Bentone gave up the practice of law and went into the distant West to hunt big game."

She buries her face in her hands. "God knows, wherever he is, my prayers follow him. I need not conceal the fact that my heart is still his, and will be until death releases me and allows me to join him in the Great Beyond, or, if he outlives me, accords

my spirit the sweet privilege of returning to earth as his guardian angel. But for this precious child I would pray for annihilation, or at least a deadening of that faculty called memory."

The two women, whose hearts are cemented by the kinship of suffering, now plan many things for the child, the culminating point of hope in their lives. In the care and education of this boy, Albina begins to see her sun going down in bright colors, and Mrs. Lane transfers her baby to her benefactress's lap, saying, "I gladly share his love with you."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ABDUCTION

"Long, long, long the trail
Out of sorrow's lonely vale;
But at last the traveler sees
Light between the trees!"

HENRY VAN DYKE.

THE heyday of happiness is not always when one is surrounded with the glamor of riches. One's truest peace and noblest impulses are often born in the mortal throes of buried prospects or crushed hopes. Then, the annunciator of love lifts the soul, and gives rise to high aspirations. Environed with the needs of others, Albina realizes her obligations to the desolate poor, as she goes from house to house.

This lesson of sympathy and fellowship is taught by little birds roosting with wing touching wing, or by the buttercups and daisies grouped together on the roadside. It is true that even the most degraded of mankind has a vulnerable spot that sympathy and kindness may touch.

Without a friendly hand to grasp, or an answer-

ing thrill of love to vibrate in answer to our heart-throbs, one's home, no matter how beautiful, how luxurious, soon turns into a wilderness; the flowers of joy all dead, sunshine overshadowed by grey clouds, and the cup of life filled to the brim with wormwood and gall.

With this thought ever uppermost, Albina follows out this lesson of the birds and flowers; with subtle, mesmeric power thus influencing those who have fallen in sin, alluring them through the little wicket-gate of hope, and on into the paths of right-living and peace.

New York is in a state of luxury, where the rich and poor jostle each other; one abounding in good things; another, with starving children crying for bread. Side by side, pass millionaires and maimed heroes of the civil strife, the latter too proud to admit their needs. Albina and Mrs. Lane ferret out the secrets of many such proud poor.

Together they, too, devise a new club for newspaper reporters, and the front basement of Mrs. Baxter's Madison Avenue home is fitted up for the club's use. In the winter a bright fire burns, and for the asking may be had a cup of tea, or chocolate, with bread.

No initiation fee is required for membership, only the signature in a book with this inscription:

"We, the undersigned, agree never to contribute

exaggerated accounts, or needlessly sensational articles for our paper, nor for the purpose of gratifying the public thirst for scandal will we ever encroach upon the sanctity of the family in its home life."

Running in and out, little Wallis Bee Lane has become the pet of the "New Writers' Club." In his every footprint he scatters sunshine over the household. Mama, and "Aunty"—as he calls his benefactress—watch his development with loving care. By Mrs. Baxter's advice, Albina makes him her legal heir; for the simple story of his name cleared up the uncertainty of the telegram, and renewed her trust in her lover's faithfulness.

One day they are all busy getting ready for the outing at the seashore, where little barefooted Wallis Bee delights to paddle in the surf, or play in the sand.

In the garish light of a June day, the sun directly overhead, the child disappears, leaving his iron hoop—his favorite plaything—leaning against the step, as if he were about to enter at the basement door. All over the city the reporters fill their papers with descriptions of the pet of the Writers' Club; and Albina offers a reward of "twenty thousand dollars for his return, no questions asked."

Many theories find voice as to the reason for the abduction. The heavy reward failing to uncover his

whereabouts, an idea gains ground that the motive was revenge, and the crime instigated by a former lover of the child's mother.

This latter theory Mrs. Lane stoutly refuses to believe, but relates an exciting scene between her husband and an Indian warrior at Saratoga Springs. Forthwith the reporters take the cue, and confidently assert that two Indians were seen on Fifth Avenue the day Wallis Bee disappeared. What more natural than the belief that the child is in the distant West with a tribe of Indians?

Swiftly the summer is blotted from the calendar. Still, not one word comes regarding the missing boy. Mrs. Lane's face again shows the deep lines of sorrow, and Albina's solicitude for her keeps the disappointment in her own heart from taking deeper root. Since her girlhood she has been drifting with the tide of human woe, no wonder the simoon of sorrow overtakes her in this keen disappointment.

She has now borne six of the trials predicted for her life, and with calmness she awaits the seventh. Deep in her soul, in amongst the dead leaves of her blasted hopes, glitter pure dewdrops of faith; and over the mountain peaks of her trials now and again gleams a bright ray of sunshine that comes with the joy of helping others. In the happiness of others, she confidently looks for the going down of her sun, "bright, like day," as foretold over her

cradle. She firmly believes that if, through her agency, she can restore the child to its mother, her sun will surely set in golden tints. She continues to offer the reward, while making every effort to cheer Mrs. Lane's sad life.

CHAPTER IX

WALLIS

" Clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphurous
Like foam from the roused ocean."

MANFRED.

A LAW student of Amherst College, always neatly dressed and clean shaven, his eyes sparkling with the fire of intellect, is now in the far distant West. He is now wearing a sun-faded suit of corduroy, and his face is brown and tanned, his hair and beard long and shaggy. This man, Wallis Bentone, lives in the heart of nature in its wildest forms. True to his resolve, he purchased a camping outfit, with Nero, his English hunting dog, as his sole companion. Beside the campfire he talks to this dumb friend, and with his head on his master's knee, Nero wags his tail, and seems to say, in dog language, " Trust me. I will be faithful to you."

There are times, however, when Bentone would welcome the bark of a hyena, even, for company. And then, again, he surprises himself by singing his college songs, with birds joining in full chorus. His only auditors are timid rabbits, " cottontails," nervously twitching their lips, their long ears erect

with attention. Nero, however, is too well trained to give chase, for it is necessary for Bentone to restrain the natural impulses of his dog, as Indians lurk on every side. Neither fear nor cowardice, however, holds a place in Bentone's bosom. His loneliness is relieved from time to time by occasional letters from a former classmate, Richard McKellar of Chicago, who delights in the study of metaphysics; and why his friend denies himself the privilege of studying the best authors is a mystery Richard seeks to solve; why Bentone is content to bury himself away from civilization with the heavens his only canopy, leaves and brushwood his softest couch, often troubles his friend Richard. He writes for an explanation.

Bentone replies :

"Dear Richard:

I have the book of nature always open. I am following the trail of buffalo and deer to kill time, to subdue a passionate love for Jessie Lea, whom I last saw in New York, the wife of Jubal Lane. To this day, I recall words from her lips that opened wide the gates of Elysium for me. I live over and over the memory of the months when she was my betrothed, and had she not fallen under the hypnotic spell of a scoundrel, who trapped her into a hasty marriage, to-day she would be my wife. I blame

myself for prolonging my stay abroad after the loss of the *Dorogan,* when my favorite cousin, Alice Grey, was lost. Fool that I was! Many contend that as 'good fish swim in the sea as ever were caught,' but I hold a different opinion. Jessie is my ideal of a perfect woman. I bade her good-bye as the wife of a man I am sure she does not love, yet, neither by word or look, did she let me know it. The perversity of our human nature is such, that our pride is gratified by a woman's questionable bearing toward us, yet we love, honor, and respect her more in her noble attitude of unsullied virtue. Now, do you comprehend, my dear Richard, why I am roaming over the West? Have pity on me and write soon to your lonely friend,

"WALLIS BENTONE."

Nothing brings us to our senses, or at least to a normal frame of mind, so surely as the craving for food. Bentone often then has to cast aside his weight of trouble to supply his wants. A pot of coffee, hardtack, and a steak of venison broiled on glowing coals, satisfies his appetite. Following long trampings he sleeps soundly, with Nero as guard, and at the first gleam of a morning sun, master and dog are on tramp again.

Now comes a letter telling of the death of Richard's mother, and Bentone replies:

"DEAR RICHARD:

"My heart is with you in this, your hour of keen sorrow. Remember it is a sweet privilege to have known your mother's love, even though you henceforth have only the memory of it. My mother is merely the creature of my fancy, a dream I would have real. I cannot recall her personality. Indeed, Richard, I always lose those to whom I would give a wealth of affection. Your mother has been such a joy in your life, now let the thought be your solace. Is it not true that we are born for sorrow? A dead sorrow can be endured, but a living sorrow is a weight that drags the soul down. My closet is filled with a medley of dry bones. My sorrow is a living, ever-present reality, and upsets my faith in womankind—at least women so easily influenced by the fascinations of a man who understands the art of flattery, or who influences her through her weakness—jealousy. Jealousy is my Jessie's besetting sin. I still call her 'my Jessie.'

"It was a monster in man's garb who stole her. Think of my present occupation, hunting, and fishing for salmon. I, who used to be fond of society and study, and now turn with loathing from it. Nature soothes the cravings of my soul, and keeps me from cursing Jubal Lane for my bitter disappointment.

"Do you remember the picture of my little Jes-

sie with the nut-brown hair and eyes as blue as a violet? It is still in my breast-pocket, as near my heart as I can get it. But Jessie belongs to another, and when I think of Jubal Lane as Jessie's husband, I am a murderer in thought.

"Richard, you ask that I come and join you in your travels abroad. But, why not change your plans, and wander over your own country with me? I have in mind a scheme—a plan to trap salmon as they go up the Columbia River. If I succeed in this scheme, and we have transportation, there will be a fortune made.

"Write soon to your friend,

"Wallis Bentone."

This letter written, Bentone, the hunter, selects a thick growth of trees under which to camp. Sweet beyond expression is the soft glow of sunset, as day after day it tips the towering peak of Mount Hood with a last lingering ray of gold and crimson. In its grandeur Mount Hood stands alone, as if, in the dim past, like some fabled growth, it sprang from the earth in a night, no rolling chain of lesser mountains to break the reach of sky and forest, forests that in the gloaming twilight look black against the soft sky. In the quiet of many evenings Bentone gives wing to his thoughts, while near by, in the trees, twittering birds seek shelter for the night.

Bentone tries to gain his own consent to join Richard in Rome, but Bentone prefers to follow the course of the Columbia River as it flows toward the Pacific. After long, weary tramps, one afternoon he catches sight of the Western sea, with a foreground of rocks that clearly mark the undulating surface of the land, the horizon dotted here and there with small boats, their sails tossed about on the waves as the weird playthings of sea nymphs. In this scene of grandeur there is no human sound to greet the lone wanderer, no lowing of cattle—nothing to suggest the proximity of animate life. To the east tower great purple mountains, almost touching the darkening clouds, now looming up, ominously, in the south.

Bentone stands in reverie, watching the changeful light of the setting sun, that like a great ball of fire suddenly drops out of sight. Face to face with nature in its wildest aspects, he is startled by the uncanny screech of an owl, that recalls an old superstition, that these birds of night foretell death, and a chill strikes his heart. What if it be his dear little Jessie about to die. Thinking of her, a strong impulse seizes him; an impulse to retrace his steps and again assume the duties of his profession. A flush of shame tinges his cheeks, as he looks back upon the privileges he has enjoyed, such as a liberal education in college, and in travel. Of what avail

is it in this useless, profitless existence he now spends? And why? In pique over the marriage of a girl he loves, he lives as a woodsman—a low level, indeed, for an educated man. Thus it is that in the loneliness of the oncoming night, a wave of remorse stirs his heart—a desire and a craving to return to manly work.

He comforts himself with the assurance that in a new life, with the cobwebs brushed from his brain, he can easily retake his place in the rank and file, and so fulfil his high aspirations in life.

At this moment a spiritual agency surrounds him, and with it strange and mystic power seem to force him to do his duty as a citizen.

In reality man is a mere bauble, a plaything when some unseen, invincible power grips him, and forces him on, to weal or woe.

Suddenly Bentone realizes that a storm is brewing, for heavy clouds darken the sky. Seeing a slender spiral of smoke in the distance, he walks rapidly, hoping for shelter. This he finds in the hut of a settler, who gladly welcomes him. From the supply of game in his knapsack, a frugal meal is soon spread for him.

To one isolated in the woods newspapers are a great boon. Bentone therefore seats himself comfortably to read by the firelight the old and recent New York papers his host supplies. In a paper

yellow with age, a paragraph catches his eye. "Twenty thousand dollars reward is offered by Miss Albina Baxter, for the return of Wallis Bee Lane—only child of the widow of Jubal Lane. The boy was trundling a hoop in front of No. 5 Madison Avenue, when he suddenly disappeared." Then follows a description of the child, and a theory that revenge, not money, is the motive for the abduction. Then the article concludes: "Clever detectives believe the boy was spirited away by an Indian, in the pay of a former lover of Mrs. Lane, who, rumor says, is hunting big game in the wilds of the West."

Wallis Bentone springs to his feet. The pioneer's cabin is too small to hold the infuriated man. Out into the open he dashes, and struggles with his emotion. "Am I, Wallis Bentone, the suspected brute who would stoop to so mean a revenge upon a loving mother? I, a gentleman by birth, and scholar by education?" He strides rapidly up and down, up and down the narrow walk leading to the suggestion of a gate.

"Revenge!" Again the blood rushes with maddening force through his veins. "Revenge! Had I been capable of so despicable a motive I should have sought to punish the man, Jubal Lane, who wronged me; surely not the woman and her innocent child." Bentone passes his hand over his throbbing temples.

"Well, the devil has secured his own at all events. Lane is dead, and I'm glad of it."

The rain has abated and the clouds have blown over, showing a full moon, its silvery gleam beautifying each rough hillock, or gaunt tree stump, but its cold light accords ill with the fever of Bentone's thoughts, as with a vow upon his lips, to which Nero alone is witness, he swears, "I will traverse the whole world, if need be, in order to discover the whereabouts of Jessie Lea's son, he to whom my darling has given my college name. I am not worthy of this high honor; but, by God, I will try to repay her by finding her boy, dead or alive."

Later, Bentone seeks bodily repose, but his emotions are too feverish for sleep. Hour after hour, he sits beside a blazing fire searching each column of the papers for additional news of the kidnapping. He is startled by the realization that the reward was offered years ago, and that it may have been paid, and the boy now safe in his mother's arms. However, another item in a recent paper states: "Detectives supposedly on the trail of the little boy, Wallis Bee Lane, have found a girl instead." This paragraph says the widowed mother is battling bravely with her sorrow, and is still convinced that her child is in the hands of Indians.

"By Jove!" Bentone exclaims, "a woman's impulses, or conjectures, are often correct. I will fol-

low her theory and steal upon every tribe of Indians in the West, until I find the boy," and he begins to formulate plans for the search.

Then a feeling of depression grips his heart. "How am I to identify a child I have never seen? 'Clever detectives' might do so, but I'm no detective. If Wallis Bee is with Indians, as his mother thinks, she probably would not recognize him now. There is only a step from a high-born boy to a warrior in feathers and war-paint. Children soon grow, and are what their surroundings make them."

Then he wonders about Miss Baxter? What relation is she to the child? What actuates her to offer so large a reward for his return? He wonders, but he has no way of ferreting out this mystery.

In early morning, before the larks rise in the air, Bentone is up burnishing his gun and pistol, ready for a start, a start on a hunt, but not for big game. The game is the precious little child who bears his name. To human eyes the chances are all against him, and possibly he will be a victim of his own rashness in creeping upon encampments of Indians, but this daredevil recklessness will add charm to a hunter's life and give spice to his daily tramps.

By inquiry Bentone learns there is a white boy with the Chilcats, an Indian tribe encamped beside the river. Later, after a hairbreadth escape, he

finds that this lad is nearly grown. He is therefore not Jessie's son.

Weeks and months of marching, and countermarching in following different clues end in disappointment. Wallis tries to gain his own consent to renounce his determination, and fly to Jessie to declare his love, to give up the useless waste of time. In this spirit he writes again to his friend.

"My dear Richard:

"I am sure you are wondering why you do not hear from me. Well, to tell the truth, I have abandoned the chase after wild game, and am deeply absorbed in the search for a boy, said to be with the Indians in this far distant West. This is what the New York papers affirm, and I am acting upon their statements. It may be a wild-goose chase, but at least it serves to kill time.

"Hold your breath while I tell you that this boy is a son of my own darling Jessie. She has been worse than dead to me, but thank God she is now a widow, and so hope springs anew in my bosom. I am frantic to go to Jessie, and lay my heart and hand at her feet, but some inward monitor restrains me, and urges me to seek the lost child. There is a reward of twenty thousand dollars offered by a Miss Albina Baxter. Who she is, I'm at a loss to know! Jessie never spoke of her to me; but rest

assured, friend Richard, the reward does not enter into my thoughts. It is love for Jessie that gives me the nerve to take my life in my hands, as I stealthily creep upon encampments of savages. It is love, unsatisfied love, that sends me wandering over the prairies. Truly, love does at times make a fool of more sensible men than I. Jessie surely cares for me; else why did she give her only child my college name—Wallis Bee?

"Have you any way of finding the whereabouts of Mrs. Jubal Lane, or Miss Albina Baxter? In your search, please do not mention my name. I am determined to keep in the background until I have visited every tribe of Indians in this section.

"If I find the boy, it will be some compensation for the blasting of my hopes by that brute of a man who dashed from my lips my cup of happiness just as I was about to drink of the sweetest joy of a man's life.

"Note the date of my letter. This is Christmas night, and I should be in my happiest mood, but I'm not.

"I have tried to picture the Christ-child lying in the manger, with the Divine Mother listening to the song of the angels, and receiving the adoration of the Magi. Struggle as I may, the mother's face is that of Jessie, and the child I see is in the midst of a band of swarthy warriors, who have hung their

game on the surrounding tree branches. Do you think it a possibility that this premonition may lead me on to success?

"A New York paper intimates that a former lover of Mrs. Lane may have instigated the abduction of her son. I'm incensed at the very thought. Were Jubal Lane alive, I'd put a bullet through his brain, confident that the idea originated in his versatile mind.

"Excuse this outburst from

"Your friend,

"WALLIS BENTONE.

"P.S.—Don't forget to make inquiries about the two ladies. I am almost ready to return East, to kneel at the shrine of Jessie's love."

CHAPTER X

MEMORY REFRESHED

"Could we but draw back the curtains
That surround each other's lives."

THE air is crisp and cold, the season well advanced, increasing the discomforts of camp-life, but intensifying the beauty of the evening sky, as nature drops to sleep, to be born again in the morning with a concert of singing birds, and rustling leaves. Day by day the heavens are overspread with tints of red, yellow, and purple, making a combination that cannot be imitated by man. Brilliant sunsets forecast the coming of the Lord in a chariot of fire.

Across the grave of Jubal Lane the little wicket gate of hope stands wide open, alluring Bentone to the arena of work; and the spiritual influence of Jessie Lea, like the whisper in the tree-tops, soothes him, as he thinks of a cheerful fireside, with the woman he loves beside him. A fire in camp means no end of annoyance from prowling beasts attracted by the glare, or it may be the vengeful savage. But for the vow to find the lost lad, Bentone assures himself he would hasten to Jessie. His mind is torn with conflicting emotions, one entirely selfish, the

other unselfish. "Why does my heart burn with a determination to find the child, and my muscles long for action in this search, if an unknown force is not urging me on? I will heed my impulse unto death." So he continues to follow clue after clue, only to be disappointed.

Then comes a letter from his friend.

"HOTEL EDEN, ROME, ITALY.

"MY DEAR BENTONE:

"I have made a note of your request to seek information in regard to Mrs. Jubal Lane, and Miss Albina Baxter. As to the lost boy, can't you see that you are on a wild-goose chase—allowing your impulse to lead you? Think of the absurdity of that newspaper theory, that an Indian, at high noon, could spirit off a white child from the busy streets of New York! It is quite as improbable and impossible as that in a spirit of sordid revenge, you, a gentleman by birth and education, would stoop to instigate the abduction.

"Can you not read between the lines of that reporter's article? It was written to create a sensation, and so increase the sale of the paper. I implore you not to lose your scalp and life on such slight provocation. Mrs. Lane's child was stolen years ago, and while the rich heiress, Miss Albina Baxter, still offers a heavy reward for the boy's re-

turn, so far as I can ascertain no clue has been gleaned by the shrewdest detectives as to his whereabouts. In reading the papers in the settler's hut, you jumbled up dates. It is hardly surprising, however, for I can well imagine the tumult in your heart —the desire to fly to Jessie, and the manly impulse to seek her stolen child. Take my advice and find Jessie. Rest assured, every item of news bearing on this subject will be quickly sent to you, by your friend, RICHARD."

Richard's letter fails to discourage Bentone, rather firing anew his soul with a strong resolution to keep up the search until he is satisfied in his own mind that the child is not under the care of Indians. "A smile from Jessie will repay me for any privation I may incur. Suppose I am scalped, Jessie will never know of my weary round of tramping, hoping to find her lost boy. I will write Richard to find her, and tell her how I have risked my life in the hope of making her happy, how I have longed to rush to her side, but resisted the impulse in her interest. So he writes the following letter:

"IN THE WILDERNESS.

"MY DEAR RICHARD:

"Should you fail to have news of me, and are convinced that I have fallen a victim of my own

rashness, will you seek a personal interview with my dear Jessie Lea, and tell her how truly I have tried to find her lost boy? Be sure to tell her that my last breath will breathe her name, and a prayer that we may meet in the Great Beyond. I would fly to the East to throw myself at her feet, but something in my heart braces my resolve to search for her little son. O Dick! I have been such a fool, if I ever get another chance, I mean to make a man of myself. Were Lane alive, I would shoot him, knowing it was he who dared assume that I could stoop so low as to abduct or instigate the kidnapping of a child.

"Daily I pray the good Lord to spare me and allow me the sweet privilege of casting my unworthy heart at Jessie's feet. Do you think she will spurn the love of your true friend?

"BENTONE."

Writing this letter produces a feeling of renewed strength for the "wild-goose chase," and as the blood-red moon rose over the hills, Bentone approaches the wigwam of Black Bear, who is at peace with both the whites and the Indians.

As he advances, Bentone reverses his gun, which, however, is carefully primed for any unexpected emergency.

Black Bear understands the signal, and comes forward with his tomahawk upside down.

From him, Bentone learns that three days before six warriors from the Chicopees passed northward on their winter hunt. They had with them a brave little lad with eyes as blue as the sky, and hair as fair as the moon, but no inducement can prevail upon either Black Bear or his son to assist in the hunt for this white boy.

Alone, then, Wallis Bentone, with his dog, begins a long, weary tramp.

"The hunters have the start of me," he says to himself, "and there is one chance in a thousand that if I overtake them I can identify a boy whom I have never seen. One false step on my part, and my scalp will dangle at a warrior's belt. But"—Bentone resolutely bows his head toward the east—"toward the rising of the sun I picture a sweet, sad face; for a smile from her, I'd court danger, even death."

The influence of the Japan current is quickly detected by animals, and great herds migrate to the softer air of the northwest. The day is closing when Bentone sights a herd of bison hotly pursued by six Indians, and a boy on an Indian pony. Although at a great distance, he exclaims, "That's Jessie's son!" and he starts after them. Then he suddenly stops to formulate a more sensible scheme. Certain death would be his only reward to attempt a rescue, save by stealth. Keeping under the cover of trees,

he pushes on in the direction of the hunters. Nero's nature is sorely taxed by the restraint, for he would give chase in full cry, if allowed.

Nature requires repose, and so to fit himself for the dangerous work before him, Bentone wraps himself in his waterproof and sleeps the sleep of an exhausted man.

Do animals think and reason? Nero, by some strange instinct, divines his master's wish, and at midnight licks his face. Bentone rises and cautiously advances, until the fitful glimmer of a campfire marks the Indian bivouac. Each object intervening is shrouded in a black pall, intensified by the red gleam of the firelight, silhouetted against the background.

Stationing Nero on guard over his knapsack, Bentone gets near enough to discern six sturdy warriors around a bed of hot coals. The hunters are in merry mood, and their chatter deadens the sound of approaching footsteps, though each crushed twig or dry leaf is an explosive to Bentone's sensitive ear. He dares not make an attempt to reach the camp until every Indian is asleep. Crouching beside a tree, he hears a night bird singing a love song, which recalls many sad memories. It recalls a visit to Jessie in her Southern home, where at midnight mocking-birds sing their sweetest songs, to assure their mates of their presence. Then every bird song

was a note from heaven, and Jessie the bright star of hope in his life. What a contrast now! Within touch of six red devils who would not hesitate to deal a death-blow, and sling his scalp at their side! And why this change? Bentone dares not dwell upon the thought.

On the tree limbs about the campfire hang one bison, two deer, and a number of small animals, so protecting the game from prowling wolves. The hunters arrange themselves in a circle, their feet toward the embers of the fire. Stretched at full length is a white boy clad in foxskin garments—a strong-looking, athletic boy. "That's Jessie's son," says Bentone to himself. We are often convinced of a thing without a tangible reason.

Soon the breathing of the sleepers gives Bentone the opportunity to get nearer the lad, whose every muscle is relaxed, his bow and arrows fallen from the grasp of his hand.

"Is this really Jessie's son?" Bentone asks himself. "I must believe it is to nerve me for the rescue." With his gun pointing toward the sleepers, his revolver stuck in his belt, he gets close enough to discern the clear-cut Roman nose of the boy, a counterpart of Jessie Lea's. One great warrior stirs, then rises and grasps his rifle. He listens, and rubs his eyes with his swarthy hand, sees no one, and again he lies down to sleep.

Creeping cautiously to the head of the white-skinned lad, Bentone says in a low voice, "Wallis! Wallis Bee!" Perhaps a passing angel kisses the lad's brow and whispers of home: for he seems to dream: a smile overspreads his face; his lips part and softly he murmurs, "Ma-ma."

Again Bentone says, softly, "Wallis; Wallis Bee." The child wakens, then true to the teaching of his captors, he grasps his bow and arrows to defend himself. A questioning look flashes from his eyes, he is bewildered by an inrush of feeling, as forgotten incidents of his home-life sweep over him and new joy, new hope springs into being. A keen desire seizes him, a desire to be cuddled in his mother's arms. In a moment his affection, like a creeping vine, reaches out for support, and he finds that support in a white man leaning over him, with friendly interest in his voice.

With a quick motion of his arm the boy motions, "Go! I will follow you."

Bentone takes from his pocket a phosphoric match-box, turning its glowing side as a signal, as he hurries away, for an ominous growl of wolves in the distance warns of coming danger.

The lad, keen of wit, understands the signal, and springing to his feet utters a note of alarm, as a pack of hungry, yelping wolves come bounding toward the camp.

Six rifle shots in quick succession rend the air, for the hunters are busy defending their game.

With his match-box flashing like a glow-fly, Bentone picks up his knapsack, and with Nero hurries away. A light bounding step soon greets his ear, and in an instant the boy grasps his hand.

Swiftly they rush forward.

In the forest there is comparative safety, but an open stretch intervenes. This must be passed before day dawns.

Keeping close together, they pick their way over the rough, uneven margin of the Columbia River, here but a small stream. There is a boat anchored to a root; they spring into the boat and row northward, keeping under the deep shadow of overhanging trees.

Slowly the sun rises and lights all nature with a torch of crimson. The snow-covered mountains sparkle and rejoice at the birth of another day. Jagged rocks and forest trees loom into bold relief. Beside the edge of the boat, rosy-colored salmon flounce their supple bodies out of the water, indignant at being disturbed at so early an hour.

Bentone is alert and watchful, and evinces great excitement over the experience of the night, and the rescue of a white boy, no matter to whom he belongs. Landing on the opposite shore, they leave the canoe to float away.

Dogs instinctively love boys at once, and now Nero ignores his master and keeps close beside the sturdy youth, who lovingly pats his soft, silky head.

Reaching a German settler's home, Nero comes face to face with two rivals, a fierce mastiff and a dachshund. Well trained, Nero now fails to suppress his antipathy to others of his kind, but his master prevents an encounter.

The settler, Moritz, a sturdy German, is ploughing, in preparation for sowing winter wheat. His wife is bending over her washtub, but the glitter of a silver dollar induces her to put aside her work and prepare a hasty meal of cornbread and home-cured bacon.

Bentone is weary and tries to calm himself for a short rest, but the growls of the dogs suggest other visitors. In front of the house stand two Indian warriors, gesticulating and beating back the dogs. They are in angry mood. Frau Moritz scents danger, and wrings her hands in distress, while her husband tries to calm the ferocious mastiff. Moritz is at peace with the Indians and wishes to keep their friendship. Unconscious of danger, their little son Carl trundles his wooden barrel hoop across the earthen floor. Springing forward, the semi-Indian lad, who has a dirk in his belt, pulls it out, and with the agility of a practiced hand whirls the hoop

round and round the room, his bronzed face a study in delight and happiness.

Suddenly he stops in front of Bentone and says, "Ma-ma! Aunty." Although he speaks the Chicopee language, these two English words hold their place in his mind.

Bentone catches the boy's hands, and looking into his clear blue eyes, he asks, "Is your name Wallis Bee Lane? Are you Jessie Lane's son? Do you know Miss Albina Baxter? Where did you leave your big iron hoop?"

These familiar names are the keys that unlock the door of the boy's memory. The mere mention of his mother's name, and that of his benefactress, floods his young heart with thoughts of his home. With a wild cry of delight he throws his arms around Bentone's neck, saying in broken English, "Take Wallis to Ma-ma! Aunty."

The "wild-goose chase" is over. The boy is found.

CHAPTER XI

HOPE AND FEAR

"Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds or hears Him in the wind . . .
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall keep him company."

POPE.

THE warriors at the gate of the German's home are not on a peaceable errand. Trouble is in the air.

Using Moritz as interpreter, Bentone bargains for the lad. He is absolutely certain that before he reaches Portland there will be a fierce fight with the treacherous Indians, but he is sure of victory if he has half a chance. "A battle won in the mind is won in reality."

The daffodil of the evening sky changes to a dull, leaden hue, followed by the murkiness of darkness, as Bentone and his companion steal away. With the night grown old, he selects a secluded spot to rest, guarded by Nero. He counts the stars overhead in his effort to woo sleep, but slumber is not enticed by so flimsy a pretext. Night turns to

dawn, and a red ball of fire creeps up behind the eastern horizon, flooding the earth with sunshine. A few morsels of food, and they pick their way along a deep cañon, with precipitous walls on every side—a cañon dry and arid, with impoverished soil and rubble that grows scarcely any vegetation. They clamber up the jagged wall, then enter a thick growth of trees, with no footpaths to follow, no well-kept roads of travel; they must struggle through the troublesome meshes of wild grape, briars and trailing vines, intermixed with low shrubbery. Nero, with canine instinct, scents danger, and as a rifle ball whizzes past Bentone's head, and buries itself in a tree, the man realizes that the battle is on. They are discovered by a band of Indians.

With deliberate aim, Bentone fires. A wild whoop, a leap in the air, and a sinewy Indian falls to the ground. In a moment the lad is seized from behind, and a dash made for the deep cañon. But Bentone's revolver does quick work. The second warrior tumbles over in a heap, holding the boy with a death-grip.

Wallis Bee, however, bounds to his feet with the agility of a squirrel, and running to his protector says, "Ma-ma! Aunty."

After some time, Bentone reaches Portland and ships for San Francisco. As uncle and nephew

they settle in an obscure street, where Bentone essays to teach the child his native tongue, easily forgotten, but as readily regained.

Not a doubt rests in his mind as to the identity of the boy, and now his one aim is to find the whereabouts of Jessie Lane. With the child as an offering, there is a better chance of securing her hand in marriage. He writes to his aunt living at Nyack on the Hudson:

"My dear Aunt Alice:

"Have you any way of finding out where Mrs. Jubal Lane is living? She is the lady whose son was stolen several years ago. I judge she may still be in touch with Miss Albina Baxter, who has offered a large reward for the return of the lad. Do let me hear from you as soon as possible, for I have decided to return to the East and civilization. I am tired hunting big game, and am going to settle down to manly work once more. I am sure you will be pleased to hear this.

"I hope you are feeling better, dear Aunt Alice. I shall come to you as soon as I reach New York.

"Your affectionate nephew,

"Wallis Bentone."

This letter finished, Bentone writes to Richard, who is still in Italy.

"My dear Richard:

"'The wild-goose chase' is over, for I have found Jessie's son. I killed two huge Chicopees as his ransom. My conscience is clear, however, for I bought the boy fairly, and the treacherous scoundrels went back on their word, and came near killing me, and recovering the lad. I found my favorite painted pipe, which I gave in the trade, in one fellow's pouch. Passing as uncle and nephew, the child and I are living in this wind-blown city of San Francisco. I am trying to find out where Jessie is. In the meantime I am teaching her son how to speak his native tongue. He is progressing famously, and is clever and alert.

"One thing about the stripling troubles me. Whenever we pass an old lady on the street with grey hair, the little fellow gets excited, and seizing my hand says, 'That's mama!' Then he takes off his cap, runs his hand through his own hair, and says, 'Purty white hair.'

"Why does he associate his mother with white hair? Perhaps Miss Albina has grey hair and he is thinking of her. I often wonder who 'aunty' is. When he says aunty in his lessons, his eyes beam with delight and he claps his hand and says, 'Take me to Ma-ma and Aunty!' This puzzles me, for his mother was an only child, and his father was also an only child.

"Now, Dick, suppose, after all, I am mistaken, and this little fellow proves to be some other woman's son. What will I do? All my hopes for the future will be blasted, and I fear my new energy will be crushed. The keenest desire of my life is to return Jessie's son to her arms. My reward! Well, let me be explicit and say that my reward cannot be paid in dollars and cents. I ask something higher and nobler. Never, even at college, was I more interested than now, devoting my life to this boy, fitting him to meet his mother without shocking her. I hardly dare trust myself with the thought of seeing Jessie. Suppose, dear Richard, after all, I fail to win her for my wife! What do you think will become of me? May I quote a few lines from an ancient Chinese philosopher? Mencius was not civilized as we rate civilization, but his thoughts are gems. Let us hope they fit my experience, especially as to supplying my incompleteness. 'When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, subjects him to extreme poverty, and confounds his understanding. In all these ways it stimulates his mind, strengthens his nature, and supplies his incompleteness.'

"Well, I have suffered; I have had my sinews sorely taxed, have been exposed to all kinds of

weather, have been hungry; and now my mind is troubled, fearing this may not be Jessie's boy.

"If all this worry has the effect of stimulating my energy, I may yet round up as one not entirely given up by either God or man. Place the letters *wo* before the man, and emphasize it if you will.

"Richard, do you think the dream of my young manhood will be realized? Jessie's face is as fresh in my memory as if we parted yesterday, I with a wicked vow on my lips, to bury myself in the wilds of the West. Intense desire prompts me now to quit my roving life, and hope lures me eastward.

"Do try to find out where Jessie is, and let me know.

"May you never be tried in love, as I have been. No one could suffer more than I have suffered.

"Your true friend,

"Wallis Bentone.

"P. S.—Do not forget to ferret out the mystery connected with Miss Baxter. I can't rest until I find out who she is—what a kind heart she must have to offer twenty thousand dollars for one small boy!"

CHAPTER XII

THE RED MOON GOES DOWN

"If we only knew the heart-aches,
The struggles and the tears,
That follow like a phantom
The wake of human years."

E. STUART WEED.

BENTONE's letter from San Francisco, and his friend's letter from Italy, cross amid ocean, as friendly letters often do.

Richard writes from Naples, Italy:

"MY DEAR BENTONE:

"Did you ever hear the saying, 'See Naples and die'? Well, I have seen Naples, but I am not ready to die. I must say, however, that the intermingling of color in sky and sea cannot be imagined. Such lights and shades I never saw in any place other than Naples. The sun seems to shine brighter, the breezes blow more gently, whilst the sea glistens with prismatic colors.

"At college we read in Cicero, and Horace, of the beauties of this country; now, I realize these

writers did not exaggerate, or even overdraw the description.

"Vesuvius, of course, is the central object of interest, with occasionally a mysterious outburst of flame, and a graceful crest of smoke. Here at Naples, many things suggest Syria, with its ancient tribes of men. Here, too, the fruit trees are laden with luscious fruit, and the sea gives rare and choice fish. Perhaps this is the reason the natives are so indolent. Their domestic life is lived out of doors; they revel in sunshine, and for food are content with a bowl of macaroni and cheese, or a glass of wine, with melons and grapes.

"When they sleep is a mystery. All night long I hear them passing back and forth, talking, laughing and, I'm sure, gesticulating. No one walks who can ride, and I have seen fifteen clamber into a small vehicle, with one poor overworked donkey to pull the cart, goaded on by blows and threats from the driver.

"I have greatly enjoyed the museums, but of these things you have read in books. I must tell you, however, that at Pompeii I watched the slow excavation of a small marble figure, in the center of an old fountain decorated with seashells, and inlaid with lapis lazuli.

"One afternoon we spent in this silent charnal house of a voluptuous city, that, two thousand

years ago, was suddenly buried. We left reluctantly, just as the sun sank down beyond Ischia. The sky was flooded with an amber light which recalled forcibly old Izaak Walton's words: 'If God gives such beauty for us sinful creatures here on earth, what must He not have prepared for His saints in Heaven?'

"ROME,
"HOTEL EDEN.

"I was interrupted, and so failed to post this letter in Naples. Here I am in my old quarters at the delightful Hotel Eden.

"The night of my return, I was placed at a small round table in the dining-room; and near me, at another, sat two ladies in deep black. They arrived during my absence in the South. I knew at a glance they were not sisters; the younger is pretty, with a sweet, sad face and an abundance of snow-white hair, which made me think, involuntarily, 'Winter is intermingled with spring.' The other lady cannot be called pretty, but she has the facial expression of an angel; her deep-set brown eyes sent a thrill through my nerves, when I chanced to meet her glance.

"'Hold your breath,' as you once expressed yourself, when I tell you that these two ladies are Miss Albina Baxter and Mrs. Jubal Lane of New York. Now, Bentone, see what a chance you have

missed by not coming over, and joining me in my travels, instead of going on a 'wild-goose chase' over the West in search for a child whose mythical abduction by a red man was the creation of a newspaper reporter. I hope by this time you have realized your folly in flying off—merely from impulse—to do a noble deed. You had far better be here to try and cheer Mrs. Lane. Her face is a study in its combination of suffering and peace. I am not surprised that you loved her so ardently. She is still pretty, but must have been a beauty in her youth.

"The world is indeed small after all, is it not?

"My first impulse led me to seek these ladies, and introduce myself as your friend; but remembering your wish I have waited for chance—skillfully helped—to throw me into their society. Do, Bentone, hasten to Rome, and try to cheer Mrs. Lane. I heard last night from a lady in the hotel that Miss Baxter has done everything in her power, backed by a fortune, to find the whereabouts of Mrs. Lane's son, whom, it seems, she has made her legal heir. The two women have now reluctantly settled to the belief that the boy is dead—succumbed to the hardships of a cruel life. My informant says that Miss Albina is as much crushed by the loss as the mother, but being unselfish, she thinks more of the happiness of others than of her

own. She is traveling, with Mrs. Lane as her guest, trying by every means to soothe the mother's heartache over the disappearance of her only child. I am told that Miss Baxter is one of the most remarkable women of the century, well read, and highly cultured, with a sweet, gentle manner that wins everyone with whom she comes in contact. You know women are apt to tell all the gossip they hear in a hotel, hence the sad story of Miss Albina is no secret. It seems she was engaged to a man whose first name was the same as yours; he was lost at sea, many years ago, as the ship neared the port of New York. Instead of rushing into the vortex of society for diversion, this heiress dedicated her life, and money, to the amelioration of suffering. They say her cup of sorrow has been filled to the brim. Strange, that trials were predicted for her while she rested, an innocent baby, in her cradle. I am told an Indian squaw muttered these words: 'Baby moon rise like blood. Baby bend with trouble seven times. Baby no break. Baby sun go down in gold, bright like day.' My informant says the seventh trial overtook Miss Baxter during her voyage, when her mother died suddenly. By the daughter's wish, in the soft evening light, as the sun sank behind the horizon, looking like a great red ball of fire, her mother's body was committed to the sea. Below the waves, on opal-

tinted couches, her lover and mother now rest where no rough winds will ever disturb their long sleep.

"People are wondering if Miss Albina will marry, and fulfil the end of the prophecy with some other lover, for old maids are not likely to have a gloriously bright sunset. Bentone, you will laugh when I confess to a curious quivering of my heart when I'm in Miss Albina's company: a sensation I fail to analyze. It cannot be love, for I came abroad to overcome my love for a girl my mother disapproved of my marrying. I still love her, but as mother is dead, I feel morally bound to respect her wish.

"What is love, anyway? Is an affinity for another the same as true love? Give your definition in your next letter. I advise you to take an early eastward-bound ship and join me in Rome. Mrs. Lane needs you to cheer her lonely heart. Hoping to welcome you, I am your true friend,

"RICHARD."

Bentone is stirred to the depths of his heart by this letter. With definite news of his beloved Jessie, he makes hasty preparation for his journey to New York, saying, "I must seek Jessie. If I lose sight of her, I may never have a chance to renew my love-making."

In Chicago he hears that Miss Albina Baxter is

to address a large meeting of "Woman's Christian Temperance Union" workers early in May. Jessie will of course be with her; and he almost decides to remain in the magic city until their arrival.

March winds are scurrying around the street corners, and to his excited mind the month of May is a long way off. He boards an express train for New York, uncertain whether or not he will go to Europe. Wallis Bee Lane is still his constant companion, and is making good progress in his studies.

CHAPTER XIII

AT THE DOCKS

"Thine eyes are stars to hold me
To love's pure rapturous height;
Thy thoughts are pearls to lead me
To truth beyond earth's sight;
Thy love is life to keep me
Forever in God's light."

ELIZABETH PORTER GOULD.

THE steamer *Mary Powell,* plying on the Hudson River between New York and Kingston, stops at her dock at Nyack.

A gentleman, a boy, and a dog land. With quick steps they hurry up Elm Avenue. The man's face is bronzed, and he appears to be very nervous as he whistles a low tune. The muscular lad halts now and then to spell the letters on brass door-plates. Again, he dashes forward with his dog in chase of twittering sparrows.

It is a delicious spring morning, musical with the songs of birds, singing their love songs among the bursting buds. There is still a crispness in the air, but the backbone of winter is broken. A pair

of robins, just arrived from the South, hold sweet counsel, as to where they shall build their nest.

Reaching number eighteen, the man hesitates, for his courage fails him, and he stands looking at the white marble steps, immaculate from the housemaid's careful cleaning. He passes his handkerchief over his brow, evidently to gain a moment's respite; then he climbs the steps and reaches to lift the old bronze knocker. There is a visible tremor in his hand, and he counts, unconsciously, the black spots made by Nero's paws on the snowy marble.

His young companion notices this hesitation, and with the spring of an athlete he seizes the knocker and gives three loud knocks, quick, firm, such as a telegraph boy gives. Both mistress and maid are startled by the sound, and hurry to the front of the house. Mrs. Thomas dreads to have news of such importance as to be sent by wire.

The door opens, Bentone's quick ear hears the rustle of silk, and he enters unceremoniously, and throws his arms around his aunt's neck before she realizes who it is.

She is startled and amazed.

"Aunt Alice, don't you know me? Wallis, your roving Wallis from the West?"

She makes no reply, but her head drops heavily to her nephew's shoulder, and tears rise and fill her

eyes. Sad memories rush to mind as she stands quite still, thinking of the time when she sat watching for the coming of this nephew, due to arrive from Europe in company with his cousin, Alice Grey. The great ship came not, but she still hopes that she may have news of her niece.

Mrs. Thomas wears a breakfast cap of soft white lace, and her silver curls hang loose about her cheeks. Wallis Bee Lane notices this, and says timidly, "Ma-ma, purty white hair." Then he steps forward and puts his brown hands into Mrs. Thomas's. Her maternal love is strong, and this boy is someone's son; she quietly, graciously greets him, with a questioning look toward her nephew. He understands, and drawing her aside, whispers: "Aunt Alice, that boy is my dear Jessie's long-lost son. Before going West I told you of her marrying Jubal Lane, thinking I was drowned at sea. Jubal Lane proved to be a worthless fellow, but this is Jessie's child, and I risked my life to rescue him from a tribe of Chicopee Indians. Sometime I will tell you my experiences."

Mrs. Thomas leads the way to the wing of the house, where, in a glass aviary, she keeps the younglings from a pair of canaries, pets of her niece, Alice Grey. The old home at eighteen Elm Avenue for long has been in the Thomas family. Heavy shadows fall aslant from the stately old

elms on to a carpet of grass as soft as an Oriental rug. And leaning against the side of the house, Wallis Bee Lane finds a large steel hoop, once the plaything of Alice Grey. He sends it whirling around the garden, his face radiant with delight. In due course a letter comes from Richard McKellar with the welcome news that he is to sail on the *Russia*, and that he will have Miss Baxter and Mrs. Lane under his care.

As the days come and go, Bentone grows impatient for the arrival of the *Russia*. To-morrow—yes, to-morrow—the ship is due to land her passengers in New York. He counts the chimes of the village clock the night through. The hours seem interminable.

In the clear light of a gloriously bright May morning Wallis Bentone secretes himself in a corner of the New York dock, and watches the passengers of the *Russia* go down the gangplank. "There she is." With difficulty he restrains his impulse to speak to Mrs. Lane, in spite of his resolve not to meet her in public. With a loving, hungry gaze he watches as Richard assists his friends to a carriage, and then he turns to greet Richard.

The college chums have a happy meeting time, and by Mrs. Thomas's invitation Richard goes to Nyack for the night.

In bed, the curtains looped back, the two friends

talk of their trials and disappointments, their pleasures and prospects for the future. Although full of new hope, Bentone says, "Richard, I'm a wreck, a mere wanderer over the face of the earth. Oh, yes, a skilful Nimrod, I'll admit. Once I planned to settle down with happiness as the keystone and climax of my ambition, with Jessie Lea for my wife. But a scoundrel intervened and cut me out. I have rained curses upon the man, Jubal Lane, who sat like a stoic while I bade my Jessie—his wife—goodbye." Bentone's blood runs quicker at the very recollection, and he sits bolt upright. "The rascal has gone to his just reward—he's gone to hell. He deserves his doom for deceiving Jessie."

Then he throws himself back on his pillow, and says:

"Dick, I tried to drown my disappointment in the wilderness and threw away my chances for a profitable career. Fate held me. Then suddenly, one night a hidden force enveloped me, seized me, gripped me firmly and led me as a blind man toward a goal that may yet be Paradise. A strange desire filled my heart and urged me to undertake that 'wild-goose chase.' You know the outcome—the finding of Jessie's son."

Richard, too, is nervous. "Stop moralizing, Bentone; think of coming joy, not of past trials, or blasted hopes. Forget Mrs. Lane's unfortunate

marriage. You have another chance to win her. She is not young, but her smile is sweet and indicative of a true woman. You may yet enjoy your dream of happiness. Compare your lot with my own. I must either dishonor my precious mother's memory, or give up my sweetheart. I am virtually without a ray of hope for the future, and I return to a desolate home, where I shall miss my mother."

Richard tosses his pillow to the foot of the bed, stretches himself, and lies stiff and still. He essays to master his tongue, to smother a strong impulse to tell Bentone of his growing interest in the heiress, Miss Baxter. The seventh trial has failed to break her brave spirit, the red moon of her destiny has gone below the horizon, now why can he not help to bring about the bright sunset predicted by the Indian squaw?

Bentone is bubbling over with excitement. His thoughts are strangely commingled with the facts of the past and hopes for the future.

"Richard, I gave Jessie up, never expecting to see her again."

"All right, friend, but do recall that you are soon to be fully repaid for your pain, your manly heroism."

"Heroism!" and Bentone laughs a bitter laugh. "Heroism! It was anything but heroism. It was merely the cringing of my soul in face of a woman's

suffering, a woman I adored, and whose eyes pleaded for peace. I tell you, Dick, but for Jessie's silent appeal the day I told her good-bye, I would to-night be lying in a murderer's grave. I went West rather than be a witness of my darling's suffering."

Softly he whistles the tune to old "John Brown," that is in the mouth of every street boy in New York. Only for John Brown's name he substitutes that of Jubal Lane.

On the brink of his happiness he is swept with a medley of emotions. One moment he glows with expectant joy, the next, the shadow of doubt obscures the last lingering ray of hope. For consolation and strength he turns to his friend. It is so much more comforting than the companionship of Nero, now asleep at the foot of the bed.

"Richard, dare I hope to call Jessie my wife? What are my chances? Tell me your opinion?"

"They are fine, without a shadow of doubt. Remember, you bring her boy back, and your reward will surely come."

And Bentone, with this sweet hope in his heart, falls asleep.

And in the Fifth Avenue Hotel, at Twenty-third Street, two ladies, weary from a sea voyage, are unconscious of the happiness in store for them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REUNION

"Ah, me! it was he that won her
Because he dared to climb."
T. B. Aldrich.

Richard McKellar is the bearer of the following note to Mrs. Lane:

"Nyack-on-Hudson.

"Dear Mrs. Lane:

"I am glad to hear that you have arrived in New York. When you and Miss Baxter are rested from your long and very rough voyage, will you both come and spend a few days with me?

"I hope you were able to find the photograph duplicates of those my dear Alice Grey had bought for her aunt. A friend in New York gave you the list, and I should be so pleased to have them from your own hands.

"Mr. Richard McKellar, of Chicago, who is my guest, will meet you at the dock with my carriage, any day you name. Could you come to-morrow by the five o'clock boat?

"Do excuse my not driving down; I am quite feeble. Sorrow has bowed me; nevertheless God is good to me. You, too, have suffered, but being still young you can look forward to renewed happiness. Hoping, then, to see you soon,

"I am yours cordially,

"ALICE THOMAS."

With a touch of pathos in her voice, Mrs. Lane reads this letter aloud to Albina.

"Will you accept? I'm sure it will tax you to meet Alice Grey's aunt, but do go, for it will cheer Mrs. Thomas to be in your sweet presence." Then she places her arms about the woman who has been all the world to her.

Putting aside her own feelings, Albina replies: "Yes, certainly we will go." A keen observer might have detected a tremor in her voice, and there were tears in her eyes.

On Thursday afternoon Richard McKellar drives to the boat landing in the little village of Nyack to meet the visitors.

Bentone shuts himself in the library with the boy Wallis. He attempts to teach him the game of battledoor and shuttlecock; but this taxes him, then he builds a tower with cards, but his hand quivers and the paper palace collapses. He turns listlessly the pages of a colored picture book.

Though strong and valiant under ordinary circumstances, to-day he is as nervous as a woman. He has repeatedly pictured the scene of Jessie receiving her lost boy, but as the hour draws near, the thought unnerves him. He is still wondering if the love of Jessie, once wholly his, will again answer to the quick throbs of his own heart? "That love that will reinvigorate my whole life," he says to himself, "and enable me to settle down to manly work."

In the midst of these thoughts, the boy at his side startles him. His quick ear has caught the sound of carriage wheels on the driveway, and he springs to his feet, and tries to go and greet Mr. McKellar's return.

Bentone restrains him. Only a thin partition now separates him from the woman he idolizes, and yet he must wait.

Mrs. Lane and Miss Albina, having thrown off their wraps, and composed themselves after meeting Mrs. Thomas, sit in the oak-trimmed drawing-room, watching the play of color as the evening sun gleams between the branches of the stately elms in the yard.

Mrs. Thomas excuses herself for a few moments. She enters the library with her eyes still moist, yet her manner shows the equanimity of a well-bred woman.

Bentone places his arms about her feeble form to support her. Her voice trembles. "My dear Wallis, may God bless and reward you fully for each trial, each danger you have endured."

Then, with Wallis Bee clinging to her motherly hand, she leads the way to the drawing-room.

With a startled cry, Mrs. Lane rushes forward, for she recognizes the sunburnt faces of the two in the world nearest her heart.

Mrs. Thomas can barely articulate, so deep is her emotion.

"Mrs. Lane, God is indeed good to restore to you your precious child."

Albina utters not a word. There are emotions of the heart deeper than words can express. Let the curtain fall in front of a scene too touching and sacred for portrayal.

. . . . .

Over the village of Nyack rests an unusual quiet; no jarring notes mar the sweet harmony of a reunion in the quaint old homestead beneath the ancient elms, and, outside, one by one, the little birds tuck their heads under their wings and go to sleep in the branches.

From a distance comes the soft notes of a flute playing "Long, long ago," while in a little cottage near by a mother tries to lull her baby to sleep. Her voice rises and falls like the voice of one

physically weak, as she chants, over and over, a familiar child's lullaby:

"Bye baby bunting,
Papa's gone a-hunting
To get a little rabbit skin
To wrap the baby bunting in."

. . . . .

Richard and Albina stand at the western window listening to the plaintive song of the woman of toil. Albina is formulating plans for the morrow to supply this mother's needs. The golden light of a brilliant sunset envelopes her sombre form and casts a glow over her face, radiant with the joy of the reunion of Mrs. Lane and her son.

Richard's heart beats quick and fast with a sensation he makes no effort to analyze, but he recalls the singular prophecy of the Indian squaw about the glorious sunset that is to be Albina's heritage.

Jessie Lane sits on the sofa with one hand encircling her boy, the other covered by a brown and powerful palm. The child is toying with her snow-white hair. "This is my Ma-ma." He jumps to his feet, and rushing into Albina's open arms, says, "Aunty, oh, aunty, where is granny?"

Tears are in Albina's eyes as she points to the brilliant sunset. "God has granny in his safe-keeping up yonder in the beautiful heaven."

Stepping to where Mrs. Lane sits, she says,

"Mother is happy; she knows our boy is safe, and this bright sunset is the reflection of her smile."

Deeply touched, Richard McKellar stands a silent witness of his friend's happiness.

Months after this, Richard has a letter from his former classmate.

"18 Elm Avenue, Nyack.

"My dear Richard:

"You will be glad to know that in a few weeks I am to marry my dear Jessie, the only woman I ever loved. I tell you, first love is not to be duplicated. I'm still on my knees at the shrine of Jessie's heart. We are to be married November sixteenth, after which we go for a ten-days' visit to relatives in Norfolk, Virginia. Miss Albina is to join us in New York, and go to Boston, and Portland, Maine. We are deciding upon a school in which to place 'our boy.' Wallis Bee is rich in friends. He is Miss Albina's legal heir, and Aunt Alice talks of leaving him a snug little sum of money. She is so much amused with the curious games he learned when with the Indians. Best of all, she delights to see him running beside cousin Alice's big steel hoop. He always spends Sunday here.

"My precious little Jessie is wondering if she dare promise to obey, she has been her own mistress

so long. I say, Hang the word 'obey'! I'm willing myself to promise to obey, if Jessie be the one to give the command. She insists I'm not fit to be a husband until my egotism is humbled by my refusals at the hand of seven women. Well, as Jessie is my first and only love, I need six others to perfect me. My one trial is far worse than the 'no' of a hundred fair maids. Indeed, I'm going to do my best to make Jessie happy. In reality my life is just beginning, for Jubal Lane upset all my plans. I suppose I am a cad to cuss him occasionally, but can you blame me, Dick? It does a fellow good sometimes to express his feelings without gloss or varnish. I'll say this much for my Jessie: she never allows me to give vent in her presence. She puts her little hand on mine and says, 'Wallis, remember he is the father of my son.'

"You may be sure, Dick, I'm as dumb as an oyster then.

"Now, I'm going to give you a word of advice. Why don't you follow my example and get you a wife?—not a 'Boston blue-stocking,' who might indeed be an inspiration to a man of letters like yourself, but a gentle, loving woman—the sort you can cuddle in your arms. I tell you, Dick, learning and brain power won't count over against such a woman. Jessie thinks Miss Albina will never marry—that she will never get over her grief at

the loss of her lover on the ill-fated *Dorogan;* but in my own mind I believe she will. You two would make a fine couple.

"This letter is as long and wordy as a woman's, and you will laugh at it, I know. You will think, 'Such a letter from a man who has slept in the forest with only a dog for companionship, who has stolen up to Indian campfires, and more than once taken his life in his hands!' The truth is, I'm so happy I believe I could jump over the moon, for very joy. Good-bye, Dick.

"I hope a bright sunset will encircle you and your future wife, just such a brilliant one as seems now to surround the life of your happy college chum, WALLIS B. BENTONE."

(In "The Yellow Star," the sequel to this book, the prophecy over Albina's cradle will be fulfilled.)

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